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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (Vice-President), took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan)(*spoke in Russian*): As more than 50 countries are inscribed on the list to speak on this item, I shall be very brief. First, I wish to express my appreciation for the holding of the discussion on this item at this time.

Kyrgyzstan believes that the United Nations must enter the new millennium as a powerful universal Organization. We greatly appreciate the United Nations efforts to reform its activities, and in particular the Security Council, which is one of its most important organs. The Kyrgyz Republic believes that security is a multifaceted concept and requires a comprehensive approach. We believe that the Security Council's work at this time should be made more effective. This could be done by broadening the range of issues dealt with in the Council and by increasing membership in both categories. I should like to confirm Kyrgyzstan's position, which has frequently been stated by representatives of my country in the General Assembly, that a quantitative increase in Security Council membership and equitable geographical representation in the Council of all countries, including the developing countries, would broaden the participation of all countries in decision-making and would promote greater democracy within the Organization. The Open-ended Working Group will continue its work and we are confident this will lead to consensus on this very important issue.

For its part, the Kyrgyz delegation will strongly and actively support the Working Group's work and will cooperate on all the aspects considered.

Mr. Flores (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): For six consecutive years, my delegation has expressed its views on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, which it considers to be of the utmost importance. On this occasion I will briefly restate our position on the three main aspects of this issue.

First, the veto, which is a core issue of the reform of the Security Council. It impinges directly on the Council's functioning and is inherently and inextricably linked to its expansion. The necessary limitation of this, in our view, anachronistic institution is more relevant than ever if we review some of the most significant events in international relations of this year, and if we recall the very well-focused thoughts of the Secretary-General, contained in his annual report (A/54/1), on the

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right to humanitarian intervention. The Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council will offer us an opportunity to examine the issue of the veto again within a few weeks. We hope that that exercise will be less routine than it has been in the recent past. Proposals in this field are varied. The Secretary-General's recent idea of the possibility that an established majority of members of the Council could override the veto deserves our interest.

Secondly, I wish to recall Spain's position regarding the expansion of the Council. We support the increase as a way of achieving a more democratic Council, this being one of the fundamental goals of its reform. Nevertheless, enhanced democracy logically entails not an increase in the number of privileged members, which contradicts the very idea of democracy, but rather an increase in the number of elected members in accordance with criteria of equitable geographical representation.

Thirdly, my delegation has supported enhanced transparency in the Council's working methods for six years. We take note of and welcome the progress achieved in this matter, as evidenced by the increase in the number of open debates and private meetings with participation of States non-members of the Council.

Yet the trees should not prevent us from seeing the forest. In other words, our main objective must be that what today is still the exception — open meetings of the Council — becomes the rule, and that what is the rule — informal consultations — becomes the exception.

Finally, Spain will participate diligently and constructively, as always, in the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council held in the year 2000.

Mr. Tello (Mexico)(*spoke in Spanish*): Today's debate marks the opening of the General Assembly's substantive consideration for the seventh consecutive year of the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, an exercise undertaken as a result of a long-standing request by a group of countries that included Mexico.

Mexico is thus committed to increasing the membership of the Security Council in order to reflect the increase in the membership of the United Nations. The composition of the Council, an organ which by express mandate of the San Francisco Charter acts on behalf of us all, must reflect the current structure and size of the Organization. Only in that way will its decisions, which affect us all, retain their legitimacy and their representative nature. But while Mexico fully supports the enlargement of the Security Council, we also see it as very important to achieve a genuine reform of its working methods, so as to transform the least democratic and least transparent organ of the United Nations into a mechanism that faithfully reflects the aspirations to equality, democracy and openness that characterize present-day international relations.

The exercise which was resumed with renewed vigour and enthusiasm in 1993 after a long hiatus during which it was not possible to discuss the question gave rise to great expectations. The end of the cold war made us believe that we would be able to embark on far-reaching changes in the composition and functioning of the Security Council. Seven years on, the difficulties we have encountered and the complexity of our task have moderated our initial euphoria.

We have been able to identify only two major issues on which consensus, or at least general agreement, exists. There is consensus regarding the need to increase the membership of the Security Council, and there is general, almost unanimous, agreement on the call to limit the scope of the right of veto of the five permanent members. I shall discuss those two issues in turn.

We all agree unreservedly that it is essential to increase the membership of the Security Council. Yet this objective, to the attainment of which no one is opposed, has proved much more difficult to achieve than it appeared. The first obstacle we encountered was the ambition of a few States to become permanent members of the Security Council, to join that conclave of the privileged that the circumstances of 1945 obliged us to create in order to ensure the very existence of the United Nations. In San Francisco at that time, Mexico expressed its disagreement with the notion of ignoring the principle of the sovereign equality of States and of granting special privileges to the victors in the Second World War. Fifty years later, it is discouraging to note that, far from eliminating this anomaly, some would seek to increase the inequality. On principle, we were opposed to this in San Francisco, and today, with greater reason, we are still opposed to such dreams of power.

Mexico does not support an increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council. It is in favour of an increase, in line with the spirit of democracy and equality, solely of the number of non-permanent

members. As to the proposal to increase both categories of membership, various questions arise, and their answers would require general agreement within the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. Allow me to mention some of these questions.

How would the expansion take place? How would the new permanent seats be distributed? What would be the role of the regional groups in selecting the candidates for permanent membership? Would the new seats be truly permanent, with a fixed occupant, or would they be rotating seats, as some have suggested? Would there be a combination of the two possibilities, with some fixed and some rotating seats? What would be the privileges of the permanent members? Would some mechanism be established for periodically reviewing the structure of the Council?

As we know from the experience of the past six years, each of the answers to these basic questions entails serious political, legal and constitutional problems. Allow me to mention some of them, for purposes of illustration and with no intention to impose any particular position.

If it is decided to grant genuinely permanent seats to a lucky few, the names of the new privileged members will have to appear in Article 23 of the Charter. If we accept that the new pattern is to remain forever, there will be no major problem, but if, as some of the aspirants themselves have proposed, a review system is designed, we would automatically be assuming a commitment to amend the Charter at fixed intervals, with all the complications that such an exercise would entail. If for the sake of simplicity it is decided not to include the names of the new permanent members in the Charter, we would be a establishing clear difference — and discrimination — between the current five and any future permanent members.

If the Assembly inclines towards the self-contradictory notion of rotating permanent seats, the distinction between these and the non-permanent seats whose occupants are elected by the Assembly would have to be clearly indicated. How are they to be distinguished? Is it a simple matter of length of term of office, or do people have other substantive differences in mind?

It is more difficult to imagine a combination of rotating seats with truly permanent seats. How would they be distributed? A system favoured by some is to award the truly permanent seats to developed countries, leaving the rotating ones for the developing world. Such blatant discrimination would be manifestly unacceptable.

What would be the privileges of the new permanent members of the Security Council? Some of the pretenders have indicated that they are not interested in obtaining the right of veto, but they also assert that no distinction can be established between the prerogatives of current and new permanent members. What does that mean?

Would we be prepared to give more States the right of veto on the terms currently laid down in the Charter? If so, how would we achieve greater efficiency in the functioning of the Security Council if we increased the number of countries with the power to block its decisions? There is an obvious contradiction here.

Apart from the enormous privilege of the veto, we all know that permanent members have other prerogatives, some of them written and others derived from practice — which we have come over these six years to know as the cascade effect. So we wonder whether the new permanent members would have those same rights. For example, would they too be ex officio Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly? Would they be permanently represented on the International Court of Justice? Would they occupy permanent seats on the Economic and Social Council?

Apart from what periodically amending the Charter would mean, the very concept of creating a periodic review system raises other doubts, such as for example whether it would entail confirming a permanent member or withdrawing its status as a permanent member. Would the mechanism be used to evaluate only the new permanent members, or would it apply also to the five imposed on us by the San Francisco Conference? Would the present and future permanent members have a right of veto in this exercise? All these questions must be studied and debated.

We all recognize the need to correct the imbalances that now exist in the composition of the Security Council. The schemes proposed to date do not meet that objective. To the contrary, they would heighten the imbalances, undermining the Charter principles of the sovereign equality of States, equity and geographical distribution.

The European Union, comprising 15 States, would have three permanent members. It must not be forgotten that the European Union already has a single currency, is developing common foreign and defence policies, and

even recently appointed a high official to coordinate that undertaking. It is inexplicable why, in this context, the European Union should feel the need to have not one, not two, but three permanent members.

Why does the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance now made up of 19 countries and established in the context of bipolar confrontation, feel the need to have four permanent members on the Security Council?

How can we be expected to accept that six of the eight members of the powerful Group of Eight should belong to the privileged category?

In that scenario we would have a Security Council in which the privileged group would be predominantly European and, obviously, developed. Is that genuine geographical balance? Would not this new composition totally ignore the principle of equity and representativity?

We have outlined here some of the difficulties the expansion of the Security Council raises, especially if an increase in both categories of membership is contemplated. I should like now to turn to the second of the issues on which there is general agreement and, I would venture to say, almost unanimity: the need to limit and regulate the scope of the right of veto of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

As we have had the opportunity to say on a number of occasions, the idea of conferring privileges on a few by enabling them to prevent the adoption of a draft resolution by simply voting against it was not unanimously supported in San Francisco, and since then ways of moderating the exercise of this right have been sought. Let us recall that in 1948, at a particularly tense moment in international relations, three of the five permanent members — China, the United Kingdom and the United States — put forward proposals for limiting the excesses. Those proposals are to be found in official documents of the United Nations that were circulated in the Working Group.

On 13 May 1996, the delegation of Mexico submitted for consideration by the Working Group specific proposals for amendments to seven articles of the Charter, with a view to restricting the exercise of the veto to the issues for which it was designed, that is to say enforcement measures taken under Chapter VII of the Charter. The Mexican proposal revives the objectives of the one put forward by Australia at San Francisco, and is fully in line with the position expressed by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We are very well aware that, despite the general agreement — the near unanimity — on the issue of the veto, we cannot impose our will. The cooperation of the five permanent members will therefore be needed for progress to be made. We have been disappointed by the intransigent attitude taken by the Five in their opposition to giving up any of their privileges, however small, on this crucial point. We recognize that the Charter of the United Nations, a legal instrument that we have all accepted, has conferred on them broad rights and privileges. What we should like is for them to begin thinking carefully about the role they should play in the United Nations of the twenty-first century, in this Organization which can no longer live in nostalgia for the world of 1945. We want these five absolute monarchies to consider the possibility of agreeing to transform themselves into constitutional monarchies, an institution that was invented by some of them. We feel that they should be ready to share some responsibilities with the others, that is to say with the General Assembly.

If, as the vast majority want, the permanent members were to agree to limit the scope of their privileges, they would be giving a tangible sign of their political will to reform the Security Council and of their desire to adapt it to present-day realities. In this light, it is difficult to accept the statement made in the communiqué issued by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members on 23 September this year to the effect that

> "any attempt to restrict or curtail their veto rights would not be conducive to the reform process".

It must be recognized that, while progress on the expansion of the membership has not gone beyond identifying the complex problems, on the issue of the reform of the working methods of the Security Council we have indeed made some progress. We have a document containing the proposals that have been drawn up in the course of our deliberations in the Working Group and enjoy general acceptance.

One of the fundamental issues still pending is the institutionalization of the measures suggested. The Working Group does not seek to impose its will on the members of the Security Council. It is for them to determine the way in which to apply our suggestions, but

we should like the reforms to be embodied in instruments that provide legal certainty.

Mexico fully agrees that there is a need to make progress towards the reform of the Security Council. After holding a general debate next year, the Working Group will have to devote itself to consolidating the progress we have achieved with respect to the working methods of the Council. We would make better use of the time available to us by concentrating our efforts on the issues on which the general agreement called for in resolution 48/26 on the submission of concrete proposals to the Assembly can be reached.

As I have sought to indicate throughout this statement, the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council continues to pose considerable problems which, far from uniting us, have divided us. Let us attempt to forge a general agreement on what is possible and leave what is impossible for later on.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): It gives me great pleasure to speak on agenda item 38, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Namibia.

Let me take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council for the outstanding manner in which it conducted the work of the Working Group during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

SADC attaches great importance to the question of the reform of the Security Council, which constitutes one of the important components of the efforts to strengthen, revitalize and democratize the United Nations. As we approach the new millennium, there is a need for a strengthened Security Council, one that is truly responsive, equitably representative, transparent, efficient and cost-effective. To achieve this purpose, there must be an increase in both categories of Security Council membership: permanent and non-permanent. Most importantly, the composition of the Security Council must reflect the realities of our time. It must reflect the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations and the principles of equitable geographical representation and the sovereign equality of States. The imbalance of the composition of the existing Council in relation to developing countries, and in particular the anomaly of the non-representation of the whole region of Africa in the permanent membership of the Security Council, must be corrected in the interests of equity, justice and the credibility of the United Nations. The Council must become a truly representative institution for all regions.

SADC fully subscribes to the Harare Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), to the effect that Africa should be allocated no less than two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats in the expanded Council and that two permanent seats for Africa will be allocated to countries by a decision of the Africans themselves, in accordance with a system of rotation based on the current established criteria of the OAU.

SADC believes that the exercise of the right of veto should be progressively curtailed until abrogated. However, if the veto is to be maintained in any form whatsoever, it must also be accorded to the new permanent members in the reformed Council.

Finally, the democratization of the Security Council implies transparency in its decision-making process. It is for this reason, among others, that we call for regular open meetings of the Security Council to hear the views of non-members of the Council and for the full implementation of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): In my brief intervention, I would like to present a number of distinct points in respect of the item under the General Assembly's consideration.

First, Ukraine continues to be strongly convinced that reform of the Security Council remains one of the most fundamental and urgent issues on the United Nations agenda. In our view, preserving the long-standing status quo in respect of that organ will have devastating effects on its functioning in the next century as a supreme authority for matters of international peace and security.

We firmly maintain that the core elements of this reform relate to the curtailment of the veto right and increase in the Security Council's membership. My next point directly relates to that assertion, which is endorsed by the overwhelming majority of Member States. Ukraine is gravely concerned over the absence of any tangible progress in negotiations on the issues of the veto right and the Council's enlargement. The consequences of this are already being felt. We are certain that, if these issues had been resolved, the world might not have witnessed many unfortunate events of the last 12 months, during which the Security Council was either bypassed, defied or abused.

Ukraine does not overestimate the difficulties involved. This reform is probably one of the most difficult issues that the United Nations has ever tackled in its history. However, as is rightly said, difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. Member States should not be disheartened in their efforts to continue the search for a generally acceptable outline of the solution to this fundamental issue.

However, we do not believe that a mere repetition of the proceedings of the last session of the General Assembly could really contribute to any progress in this reform. As Mr. Gurirab will guide the reform process during the current session of the General Assembly, my delegation could not suggest better assistants for him in this endeavour than Ambassador John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren of Sweden. Over the past year, they have displayed great dedication and high performance in guiding the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly and we hope very much that they will continue as its Vice-Chairmen next year.

At the same time, with all their creativity and workmanship, the members of the Bureau of the Working Group can achieve very few results without strong impetus and incentives from the outside. We know that *faire bonne mine à mauvais jeu* — to smile in the face of adversity — is not really uncommon to this Organization. At the same time, there also exist some fundamental issues that are entitled to exemption from this rule and have to be addressed with energy and responsibility. It is clear that Security Council transformation is among them. In our opinion, this debate is the best opportunity for delegations to make sound pronouncements about what they would like to achieve during this last session of the twentieth century, what efforts they are willing to put forth to that end and what concessions and sacrifices they are prepared to offer to each other. If the discussion indicates a lack of the necessary resolve and political will to move forward, my delegation would not favour deliberations in the spirit of the principle enshrined in the French expression I cited earlier.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate some of the key elements of the position of Ukraine with regard to Security Council transformation. Ukraine believes that the total size of the enlarged Security Council should be from 24 to 26. Ukraine will support an increase in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. My country has repeatedly expressed its understanding of the desire and willingness of Germany and Japan to assume the responsibilities of permanent members. Ukraine could support a Council enlargement that would also allow the addition to the permanent membership of three new permanent seats for developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Redressing the obvious under-representation in the Security Council of the Eastern European countries remains a *sine qua non* condition for our approval of any comprehensive reform proposal.

As I have already emphasized, Ukraine cannot conceive of any meaningful transformation of the Council without addressing the issue of the veto. Ukraine strongly believes that, under the present political realities, the institution of the veto, at least in its present form, is absolutely obsolete and unjustified. Secondly, my country does not find any sustainable argument that could defend the obviously undemocratic character of this institution. Last but not least, Ukraine is deeply convinced that the existence of the veto right is one of the major reasons why the Security Council finds itself so frequently prevented from discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Against this perspective, we hope very much that the permanent members of the Security Council can demonstrate the willingness to make positive changes in their currently deplorable position on the matter. Proceeding from our general stance towards the veto right, we would consider inappropriate its extension to prospective permanent members.

Finally, Ukraine attaches great importance to the so-called cluster II matters. We welcome the fact that the General Assembly's deliberations have already produced some commendable changes in the working methods and other areas related to the day-to-day functioning of the Security Council. As an incoming elected member of the Council, Ukraine will do its best to further influence the dynamics in this domain.

Mr. Stuart (Australia): The report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, which we have before us in document A/53/47, contains both good news and bad news. The good news is that the report shows once again the high level of interest in and support for reforming and enlarging the Security Council. Substantial discussion took place in the Working Group throughout the year on most issues relevant to the reform debate. It can even be said that progress was made, with a narrowing of differences on a number of key issues including, in particular, the question of working methods.

Credit is due to Mr. Gurirab's predecessor, Foreign Minister Didier Opertti of Uruguay, and to the co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador De Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden, for their efforts in working towards agreement on this difficult issue. The series of conference room papers prepared by the Bureau during the course of the year were important and welcome initiatives to help bring the views of the membership together.

This year's report, for the first time, contains a set of observations about the areas of agreement and disagreement in the Working Group that will, as they are intended, prove useful when the Group resumes its work. We should take some encouragement from these observations and build on them next year.

Other speakers today have noted that the deliberations of the Working Group have already had some positive effect on the working practices of the Council. We welcome the steps the Council has itself taken to improve transparency and facilitate the participation of non-members. We thank in particular those Council members, elected and permanent, which continue to press for such reforms. But more remains to be done.

The bad news is that, six years after the Working Group was established and 20 years after the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council was first proposed as an issue for the General Assembly, we are still not yet at the point of agreement on a package of reform measures. At the end of a year which saw the membership of the United Nations grow to 188, the size and structure of the Security Council remains as it was 34 years ago, when it was last expanded to accommodate a burgeoning United Nations membership of 113. In failing to agree on a formula for expansion since then, we have failed to uphold the principle of equitable representation.

Australia is not unrealistic about the difficulties of these questions. They are inherently complex and political in nature. But where such a strong measure of consensus already exists in support of reform — and only a very few countries seem to be happy with the status quo — there should be no reason why, with political will, we cannot find compromises which deal effectively with the central issues of expansion, the veto, working methods and periodic review.

We look forward to resuming work in the Open-ended Working Group next year under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly. We hope we will pick up where we left off last year, engaging in substantive discussion and negotiation, with a collective determination to succeed, rather than with stale exchanges of known positions.

Before concluding, I would like to touch briefly on an issue mentioned already in today's debate and in the general debate that introduced this session of the General Assembly: the issue of electoral group reconfiguration. While it is related to the question of Security Council reform, we are not suggesting here that it be added to the agenda of the Open-ended Working Group. Electoral group reconfiguration goes further than Security Council reform, touching on the way we organize ourselves for electoral purposes across this Organization. It is a long-standing interest of the Australian Government.

Reconfiguration of the electoral groups is needed to address the substantial disparities in the size of existing groups and the inadequate level of representation available to many subregions, including Australia's own geographic region. It would, as my colleague from New Zealand has already pointed out, be a step towards a more democratic organization. It is an issue we believe warrants more serious and considered attention by the Assembly.

Mr. Ka (Senegal): For the sixth consecutive year, the General Assembly is called on to consider the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. Since 3 December 1993, when the Assembly adopted resolution 48/26, establishing the Working Group, we have invested considerable efforts of reflection and creativity in the exercise aimed at restructuring the Security Council, desiring, inter alia, to enhance its representativity, credibility, legitimacy and authority. To that end, constructive proposals and timely,

enriching contributions have been formulated and presented.

We have all sought the adoption of specific consensus decisions that would lead to for qualitative improvement in all aspects of the Security Council's work, thereby enabling our common instrument to operate more effectively and transparently in the discharge of its primary responsibility, as set forth in the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.

After six years of negotiations within the Working Group, one fact is clear to all of us: in the work of reforming the United Nations, reform of the Security Council is certainly one of the most difficult and sensitive issues facing the United Nations since its founding. The feeling of powerlessness, if not discouragement and frustration, experienced in the attempt to achieve coherently and comprehensively this desired reform of the Security Council is the result of many differences of view in the quest for consensus or general agreement on the extent of the reform. Today, after the progress made in the various reforms of other principal organs, reform of the Security Council is clearly the missing link in the overall process of reforming the United Nations.

The exercise is certainly delicate and the political stakes are clear; but that situation and the impression that we are just marking time should not discourage us. On the contrary, we should strive to re-establish the spirit of dialogue in search for dynamic compromises; that is the only way we can move ahead.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Accordingly, I share the view that we should first of all state our various positions on the various questions relating to the reform so that we can identify new ideas or proposals that might offer areas of agreement and lead to more extensive consultations, under the auspices of the Chairman of the Working Group, in order to bring positions closer together on points of disagreement. In fact, at this stage, I think it is essential to focus our attention and capitalize on what we have in common and then gradually continue to seek solutions on what divides us. It was this gradual approach that enabled us to unanimously adopt resolution 53/30 on 23 November 1998; this settled an important matter of procedure relating to the majority required to take a decision on reforming the Council.

The same spirit inspired the great majority of Member States, which heeded the appeal of Mr. Didier Opertti, last year's President of the Assembly, and responded massively to the questionnaire distributed by the Working Group's Bureau. The same applies to progress made on important points in group II and the great progress in the negotiations in cluster II. This gives us great hope for the early completion of our work on improving the working methods of the Council.

While we welcome this movement in the right direction, when we scan the horizon we must also admit that much remains to be done and see the many differences of view on fundamental issues of reform. There are differences of view, first of all, on the size of an expanded Security Council. On the one hand, there are those who stress the effective functioning of the Council and thus advocate a Council of 21 members; and on the other hand, there are those who advocate the necessary democratization of representation and, accordingly, advocate an expanded Council of 26 members. It is clear that the great majority of States would not be satisfied with a Council of 21 members distributed between the two categories of seats.

This is why my delegation believes that the President of the Assembly should focus efforts and continue consultations on finding a dynamic compromise on a number that could bring positions closer together and meet the requirements of democratization of the Council.

Of course, it is important to have a Council that can discharge its responsibilities effectively, but have we not often seen the Council's action blocked, even with its current composition?

There are also differences of opinion on expansion. Some advocate expansion in both categories, while others would prefer a limited expansion in the non-permanent category only, in the event that the current exercise is blocked.

We must take account of the new post-cold-war configuration of international relations and also of the fact that the great majority of Members come from the South. In order for the countries of the South, in particular the African countries, not to lose the opportunity provided by the current context of Security Council reform, my delegation strongly supports the idea of expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

Finally, there are differences of opinion on the delicate and complex question of the veto. This sensitive issue was discussed at length in the negotiating sessions in the Working Group, and it has emerged clearly that the great majority of States regard the veto right as anachronistic and discriminatory. They advocate limiting the scope of its application with a view to its progressive elimination. For those States, limited use of the right would make it morally and politically more acceptable.

Nevertheless, because of the positions stated time and again by the five permanent members, which are hardly likely to accept the principle of elimination or even reduction of their powers within the Council, realism must now guide us. Accordingly, to break the present deadlock, my delegation would reiterate the proposal we made two years ago: to hold a substantive debate on the question of the veto with the permanent members, so that we can agree with them on changes that might be introduced, by common consent, to the scope of application of this right, which, once it has been modified somewhat, should belong to all permanent members, old and new.

The differences of opinion that I have just listed make clear what is at stake in reforming the Security Council. The Council's mandate makes it a powerful decision-making centre and gives it a privileged and envied place within the United Nations system. This explains, and increases, the difficulties encountered in the reform process, while slowing its pace.

Despite these difficulties and differences of opinion, we must work in a spirit of patience, open-mindedness and constructive innovation, so that we can finalize this exercise.

In this spirit, the African common position represents a solid contribution to this positive effort at overall reflection.

I shall not reiterate the main ideas. I have on several occasions stated the African position in the Working Group in my capacity as Chairman of the ad hoc reform committee of the group of African Ambassadors. Moreover, my colleagues from Algeria and Cameroon — in their capacity as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and current Chairman of the African Group, respectively — will have the opportunity to present our position eloquently. I fully associate myself with their statement.

I should like also to note that in accordance with the decisions of the Council of Ministers of the OAU, which met in July last at Algiers, the ad hoc committee of the group of African Ambassadors will be meeting very soon to review the draft document on the concept and modalities of the two rotating permanent seats to be allocated to Africa. Subsequently, the document will be sent to the Council of Ministers of the OAU, which is to meet in February. Once adopted by the Council of Ministers, the document will be submitted for approval by the African heads of State in June and July 2000 in Togo. This reflects the importance that we Africans attach to the process of reforming the Security Council.

The relevant proposals made in the African common position, particularly the generous, democratic and realistic formula of a rotating permanent seat, stem from our continent's desire to ensure that the interests of all countries are taken into account within the context of a broader democratization of the system of representation in an expanded Security Council.

The world today is not what is was in 1945, when the founding fathers created our Organization. It would therefore be anachronistic to try to preserve today what other circumstances created over 50 years ago.

Restructuring of the Security Council is now an incontrovertible requirement, as the promotion of international peace and security in the next century will clearly require a revitalized and more effective Security Council. This reform is all the more desirable because for some time now we have noted a rather regrettable trend of keeping the Council on the sidelines, as was quite clear in the case of Kosovo. Certain Member States and regional organizations have had to take coercive measures without Council authorization. Others have flouted sanctions imposed by the Council or simply refused to cooperate with it.

This situation is aggravated because of the increasingly frequent differences of opinion within this decision-making body, which lead to inaction on the part of the Council in the face of humanitarian tragedies and situations that are clear threats to international peace and security. I would stress that Africa, which has the greatest number of conflicts, is paying heavily for the hesitation of, and divisions within, the Security Council.

We must today have the courage to acknowledge that today more than ever, the Security Council needs to be revitalized; that, because of a lack of transparency, it

is not functioning to the general satisfaction of the Members of the United Nations; and that it does not represent States equitably and democratically.

At the dawn of a new millennium that is replete with uncertainty and undefined threats, we all need a renewed Security Council that can adapt to a changing world — an invigorated Security Council that can demonstrate resolve and authority in shouldering its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Six years have elapsed since the General Assembly first took up the issue of Security Council reform in a process that has been followed with close attention by Member States.

During that period, a number of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council were held each year. At those meetings, all constructive and detailed proposals put forward by individual States and groups of States were debated in a sincere and comprehensive manner.

Nevertheless, as clearly indicated in the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/53/47), there still exist considerable differences of opinion on this issue. The expansion of the permanent category, in particular, continues to cause the most serious confrontation and division among Member States. The curtailment and abolition of the veto power, which constitutes a major obstacle to democratizing the United Nations, remains simply a demand, far from being realized.

The continuation of such an undesirable situation today is, in our view, ascribable to the parochial attitude of certain countries that use the reform process to fish in troubled waters and maintain their privileged status in the United Nations by all means available.

In the next year, in a new millennium, concerted efforts should be made to achieve tangible results in the deliberations on Security Council reform. To this end, there is a need for Member States to approach the deliberations with a practical and realistic attitude on the basis of experience and lessons drawn from previous meetings on the reform. We are of the view that the greatest contribution the majority of Member States can make to the reform of the Security Council at this stage is to expand the non-permanent membership, which is relatively easy to agree upon. The fact that there has been no agreement at all on the composition of the Security Council, even after several years of intensive and comprehensive discussions, is tantamount to showing the inability of the United Nations, thus disappointing the international community.

We believe that expanding non-permanent membership first is the most realistic and quickest way to make the composition of the Security Council reflect today's reality, characterized by a substantial increase in the United Nations membership. In expanding the non-permanent membership, additional seats should be distributed fairly, in full consideration of the number of countries from each region, by giving priority to developing countries, which make up more than a two-thirds majority of the United Nations membership.

Concerning the expansion of permanent membership, it is reasonable to defer the deliberation of this question for the time being in the light of the fundamentally differing views existing among countries. As we are well aware, thanks to the deliberations that took place on the basis of the questionnaires concerning the Security Council reform that were presented during this year's meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, the expansion of permanent membership involves politically sensitive issues linked with the divergent interests of Member States. As long as there is no radical change in the positions of countries in this regard, our future deliberations will once again stir up serious confrontation and division. As a matter of fact, we are doubtful of any possible agreement on this issue. Such a complicated issue as the expansion of permanent membership should no longer constitute a brake to the expansion of non-permanent membership. Furthermore, the deliberation of the expansion of permanent membership, which entails, in essence, to bestowing privileged status on a handful of countries in the United Nations, does not conform with today's realities, in which inter-State relations are increasingly complicated after the end of the cold war.

Even in the case that permanent membership is expanded on the basis of a consensus of Member States, we hold that priority should be given to developing countries, which are often denied opportunities for participating in the deliberations on issues concerning the maintenance of international peace and security.

A country such as Japan, which has failed to make a proper apology and compensation for its past crimes

and which, in particular, is devoid of independence in dealing with international issues, should not be accepted as a permanent member in any case.

It is equally important for the present permanent members to take a constructive attitude in order to achieve real progress in the reform of the Security Council. If the permanent members with veto power continue to maintain conservative positions simply in defence of their privileged status, the reform of the Security Council will never be realized, now or in the future.

In conclusion, my delegation expresses its hope that this meeting will provide an important occasion for making a breakthrough in the deliberations on the reform in the next year as we enter the twenty-first century.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): For the seventh consecutive year, the General Assembly is dealing with the question of the reform and expansion of the Security Council. It is evident that these seven years have allowed the Member States, individually and collectively, to formulate and present their positions clearly, whether in the general debates of the General Assembly, under the item under discussion today, or in the framework of the Working Group on the reform and expansion of the Council or in other forums. Hence, the delegation of Egypt must reaffirm at this stage the components and the principles of its established position, which we have presented in the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, whose Working Group on this issue Egypt chairs, as well as in the African position adopted in Harare and in the Arab position as regards this question. The details of these positions are recorded, as I have explained, in certain papers, namely, the non-aligned papers presented in 1995, 1996 and 1997, as well as in the declarations and communiqués of the Movement, most recently the Durban Declaration of 1997. The African position is clearly reflected in the Harare Declaration of 1997, and the Arab paper presented in New York that year is clear on the position of the Arab Group relating to the expansion of the Council.

All these papers are available as official documents and are attached as annexes to the reports of the Working Group adopted by the General Assembly during the last few years. We have no doubt that there will be an opportunity to present them once more in detail when the Working Group resumes its work next year. Therefore, the delegation of Egypt will limit itself to the following general remarks today.

First, the report of the Working Group at the fifty-third session (A/53/47) reaches some general conclusions and lays out some elements that are useful to contemplate before the Working Group resumes its work this session. Among these is the recognition that there are certain essential points of difference and divergent opinions regarding the expansion of the Council, especially on the issue of the categories to be covered by the expansion. It is imperative in this regard to pursue certain innovative and even non-traditional approaches to dealing with this question. The positions of the various groups of States on this issue are well known, as I have explained. Hence, instead of continuing to present and repeat these well-known positions, let us try to study the actual consequences or practical implications of each of these positions on the composition and the functioning of an expanded Council, and how the result might be in keeping with the principles and objectives that we seek in trying to expand the Council.

Each of the well-known positions regarding expanding the Council presents a scenario for the expanded Council. Consequently, as Member States we can consider these various expansion scenarios and assess the extent to which each of them would actually attain the objectives sought by the expansion and whether they are consistent with the principles that should guide such expansion.

The approach we are proposing requires us to bear in mind the objectives of the process to expand and reform the Council as well as the guidelines envisioned for this process. The main objective of this process, in our view, is to achieve a Security Council that is more capable of meeting its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter, a Security Council that is more representative of the Member States, more democratic and more responsive to the challenges of the maintenance of international peace and security.

To achieve these objectives we have to respect the principles of the expansion process. In our view, among these principles there are two essential ones: equitable geographical representation and sovereign equality among States within the framework of an increase in the membership of the Council in order to render it more democratic and more representative. These principles were in fact adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement.

It may be instructive to consider the issue of the efficiency of the functioning of the Council in the framework of strengthening its ability to respond to the

challenges of the maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation recognizes that these principles and objectives may not be comprehensive. However, we think they are the minimum by which we may be guided on the basis of the Charter and of General Assembly resolution 48/26, the 1993 resolution that established the Working Group and that was adopted by consensus.

We also realize that some time may be required to analyse and consider this proposed approach. However, as I explained, the General Assembly has spent seven full years on this issue without reaching a concrete conclusion regarding the expansion of the Council. So it may be useful to explore new methods of work regarding the issue. My delegation looks forward with an open mind to proposals on this issue made by the Bureau of the Working Group or by any Member State.

Secondly, the report of the Working Group at the last session confirmed that expansion and the reform of the Council's methods of work, including the process of decision-making, are integral parts of a common package. The report also reaffirmed that we cannot deal with the expansion of the Council without considering the issue of the veto.

Proceeding from these observations, it is imperative to specify and curtail the scope of the use of the veto. This position is opposed by the five permanent members of the Council, unlike the rest of the Member States. The Permanent Representative of Mexico reminded us of this when he referred to the position of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of those five States last September. I must add that the use of the veto should be curtailed before the adoption of any package aimed at reforming or expanding the Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement has registered its opinion on this issue in the relevant official documents. We are convinced that sufficient papers have been prepared on this issue to allow it to be considered in a more specific, more detailed manner within the framework of the Working Group during this session.

In this respect, we can also explore new ideas and new proposals, such as granting a greater role to the General Assembly in reviewing the use of the veto by a permanent member. Ultimately, in accordance with the Charter, the Security Council pursues its work on behalf of the Member States. If the majority of the Member States would vote to overrule any given veto, then it may be deduced that the use of the veto in such a case does not represent the position of the majority. Thus, one cannot claim that exercising the veto is in the interests of the Organization and its members.

There is no need to recall certain recent examples and events that are still vivid in our memories, events that undoubtedly led to the marginalization of the role of the Security Council as a direct consequence of the power of the veto and the explicit or implicit threat of its use by certain Member States. This marginalization was also a consequence of certain States impeding the Council from making decisions democratically and transparently.

Thirdly, the issue of the reform of the working methods of the Security Council and of increasing its transparency are no less important; rather, they are even more significant than the issue of the increase in the membership of the Council. The last report of the Working Group reflected the progress that has been achieved in the debate on this important issue. Furthermore, recent practices of the Security Council, such as the holding of open meetings, reflect the Council's recognition of the importance of transparency in its work. We hope that this development in the Council's working methods has proved that certain States' fears that opening the meetings of the Council would hamper the Council's work are unfounded. In fact, these meetings have had a good effect on the work of the Council.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the Egyptian delegation's full cooperation with the General Assembly's thorough consideration at this session of the question of reform and expansion of the Security Council, under your leadership, Mr. President, in order to achieve a Security Council that is more representative and democratic, in keeping with the guidelines agreed upon for this process.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): When the Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council concluded its deliberations held during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, my delegation was gratified to note a number of positive and encouraging developments. These include, *inter alia*, the affirmations that the reform process should be conducted in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and that, in that context, the Working Group constitutes the appropriate forum to pursue efforts towards the reform process; that it is important to fully respect the need for transparency in the reform, with regard both to the Security Council's composition to ensure equitable representation and to its functioning; that there is a link

between the question of expansion and the exercise of the veto; that there should be periodic reviews of a reconstituted Council to adapt to new and changing realities; and that there has been continued progress made with regard to the working methods and practices. Taken together, these have laid a solid basis upon which to build an acceptable edifice of Security Council reform.

But it is also clear that even after marathon deliberations spanning a six-year period, we are far from reaching a general agreement on substantive issues comprising, among others, new permanent members or seats, the total number of members of an enlarged Council in the permanent and non-permanent categories, decision-making and the institutionalization of certain procedures and practices that are already in effect. The central problems continue to be democratization of the Council's membership, transparency of its functioning and accountability to the general membership.

We have considered at length a myriad of proposals and have thoroughly examined them as regards their conformity with the contemporary world and implications for the efficient functioning of the Security Council. Thus, various proposals for categories of membership were submitted along with the criteria for election and privileges, obligations and responsibilities. We now have a general understanding of these categories and the reasoning behind them. In this context, it is essential to bear in mind that notwithstanding geopolitical, economic, demographic and other realities, developing countries continue to be disenfranchised, as four out of five permanent members are from the developed nations, an anomaly which cannot be perpetuated. It is also pertinent to note that two thirds of the world's population, in the developing countries, is without representation in the permanent membership; hence, this aspect of expansion should be addressed now. To continue with the status quo would be tantamount to perpetuating representational inequality and an infringement of the democratic principle on which our Organization was founded.

Likewise, the question of an increase in non-permanent membership also touches on the Council's representative character, as only 8 per cent of the general membership is now represented in the Council. Further compounding the situation is the fact that although the membership of the Organization has grown by nearly 60 per cent since the last increase in Council membership, in 1965, there has not been a corresponding increase in the membership of the Security Council for over three decades. Consequently, any review of the Council's composition must take these factors into account and thereby ensure a balanced configuration in the composition of the Council which would inevitably lead to the widening of its decision-making basis.

As far as the exercise of the veto is concerned, documents of the United Nations show that approximately 280 vetoes have been cast, most of them during the cold war era. To contend that these were cast in the interest of the international community, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter, would be a travesty of facts. On the contrary, it would be closer to the truth to contend that these were used to promote the national interests of the countries concerned. This situation gave rise to a widely shared perception that the Security Council was being used as an institution for the imposition of the will of the strong over the weak or that world affairs were being run by a small group of powerful nations. This is the reason for the near universal denunciation of the exercise of the veto, which violates the wishes of the majority, one of the cardinal principles of democracy.

The insistence on this presumed right may buttress the disturbing trends, witnessed in recent times, of the marginalization of the Council's role and the erosion of its authority in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is in the interest of all nations to reverse these trends through flexibility, compromise, realism and pragmatism, so that the objectives that we have collectively set for the reform the Council will materialize, and this in turn will enable the Council to cope with the challenges that it will surely face in the new millennium.

With regard to the Council's procedures, the beneficial impact of the Working Group's deliberations is apparent in the increase in the number of open meetings of the Council, the increased transparency in the proceedings of the sanctions committees and the briefings offered by the presidency at the conclusion of the informal consultations. To a greater extent than ever before, the Council's functioning and *modus operandi* have improved through its relations with the general membership of the Organization.

Yet the secrecy surrounding decision-making during informal consultations, from which Member States, especially those involved in disputes, are denied an opportunity to express their views, continues to be a cause of concern. This closed-door approach is incompatible with the ongoing efforts for timely and adequate information and has rendered the Council less

transparent. Written records and documents would ensure the free flow of information, dispel misunderstanding and reinforce confidence in the decision-making processes. Open meetings of the Council should become more routine without relegating consultations, which my delegation understands are an essential part of diplomacy. The provision of reliable and pertinent information is also an integral part of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council and the promotion of greater interaction between these two major organs of the United Nations.

In sum, the composition of the Security Council should be comprehensively conceived and its functioning dedicated to peace, justice and security. Its credibility and moral authority can only be enhanced by its acting in a prompt, even-handed and impartial manner and in the interests of all States.

The question of reform of the Security Council is admittedly one of the most difficult issues ever faced by Member States of our Organization. In recognition of this truism, sustained efforts were made to explore various aspects of the complexities involved in dealing with an issue that impinges upon the vital interests of all nations. We are convinced that the progress already made has laid a solid basis for further work towards reconstituting the Council on the basis of a package of reforms to which Member States are committed.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express to the President of the General Assembly its best wishes in discharging his onerous responsibilities as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group. My delegation wishes to see the continuation of the work of the Vice-Chairmen, Mr. John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Mr. Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, and Indonesia remains confident that given their experience, creativity and stewardship, our deliberations will lead to a successful conclusion. In working towards this objective, we pledge our full cooperation.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council neither reflects today's international realities nor represents the interests of the membership of the United Nations. The Security Council does not act on behalf of Member States, to which it is answerable under the Charter. The Security Council is not democratic, not equitable and not representative. The Security Council is not and cannot be effective with its current working methods and therefore requires in-depth and urgent reform. Those conclusions directly and unambiguously articulate what Cuba's position has been from the outset on the item before the Assembly today.

Moreover, we have been witness this year to events that unfortunately indicate not only that the Security Council often acts without authority and in ways and places it should not act, but that on other occasions it forgets its responsibilities to Member States, neglects to take action and is even completely ignored by parties that in other cases resort to it at their own convenience.

The military attack launched under United States leadership by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia took place in flagrant violation of the Charter and of the most basic norms of international law; the alliance did not even take the trouble to request due authorization from the Security Council to begin its military action. Ultimately, the protection afforded them by the veto makes them immune to any possible United Nations action.

The events in Kosovo irreparably damaged the Council's already weakened credibility and legitimacy and clearly showed the real danger that the entire present-day international security system based on the rule of law and the principles of the United Nations Charter could collapse and then be at the mercy of any unilateral decisions that the military Powers might take. Under the Charter, only the Security Council has the power to impose measures entailing the use of force. The use of force in any other circumstances, apart from self-defence, is illegal.

Note that although that is what happened in Europe, in other regions such as Africa we see verbal commitments rather than real action. Although the majority of items before the Security Council relate to Africa, neither attention nor resources are focused on that continent. That discriminatory treatment must not continue.

The membership of the Organization has more than trebled since 1945 thanks in particular to the admission of many newly independent developing countries. But it has been more than 30 years since the membership of the Security Council rose from 11 to the present 15. The fact that the membership of the Council is barely 8 per cent of the total membership of the Organization is, at the least, cause for reflection. Although they constitute more than two thirds of the membership of the United Nations, developing countries are glaringly underrepresented on the Council. Any predetermined selection of new

members that excludes non-aligned and other developing countries would be unacceptable.

The Security Council must be expanded to include new members, both permanent and non-permanent. The principle of equitable geographical distribution must be strictly applied to this increase in the two categories. As the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has indicated, failing agreement on other categories, only the number of non-permanent members should be increased for the time being.

Cuba does not favour the creation of new categories of Security Council membership. The new permanent and non-permanent seats created as part of the reform should carry exactly the same prerogatives as present seats; no discriminatory criteria should be adopted.

The membership of the Council should increase by no fewer than 11 seats; a membership of fewer than 26 could not correct the present manifest imbalances. Cuba favours not only an increase in non-permanent seats for the three regions of developing countries, but also permanent membership for a minimum of two countries from Africa, two countries from Latin America and the Caribbean and two developing countries from Asia; this would bring us closer to the equitable geographical distribution we are seeking.

The outdated privilege of the veto must disappear. A member will use or threaten to use the veto only when it is not in agreement with the majority; it is therefore inherently anti-democratic. Now, the mere opposition of a single permanent member can block the will of 187 Member States. I am not speaking only of the 247 vetoes that have been cast to date, but also of the far greater number of so-called silent vetoes that determine the course of informal consultations.

Today's Security Council is efficient only when it comes to preserving the interests of its permanent members. Some of those members, or others which are protected by their military alliances, are now promoting within the United Nations concepts such as "humanitarian intervention" and are saying that the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are obsolete. Of course, none of these States are worried that one day they could be the object of "humanitarian intervention" on some pretext: the veto guarantees them the protection they need. Cuba reaffirms that the principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States retain their full force.

The General Assembly should consider creating some practical mechanism, beyond its consideration of the annual report of the Security Council, that would enable it regularly to assess the Council's work, including the work of the permanent members. At present, we cannot opt to encourage permanent members to report to their respective regional groups, because some groups would have no one to make such reports, such as the African group and the group of States of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Although there has been progress this year in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council with respect to cluster II issues, that progress has been modest and should not be overstated.

Genuine reform of the Security Council means that informal consultations should be the exception and not the rule in the Council's everyday work, so that States not members of the Council can have all the information they need and that they can participate in the broadest and most effective way possible in the work of the organ that, according to the Charter, represents them and acts on their behalf.

We are encouraged by the hints of transparency that we have seen this year in the Security Council under certain Presidents who decided to take at least some account of the provisions of rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. But it is not enough to hold open debates in which the views of States not members of the Council are almost always heard moments before a decision is taken and have no real impact on the action the Council takes.

Nor can we talk about reform without strengthening the guiding role of the General Assembly and unless the Assembly fully exercises its powers under the Charter, including those relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. As the sole principal organ of the United Nations in which all Member States participate, in which there is no room for hegemony and in which the obsolete right of veto does not exist, the General Assembly has the right and the duty to be fully informed of the activities of the Security Council and to make whatever recommendations it deems necessary.

Security Council reform is undoubtedly the most sensitive task in the reform of the United Nations as a whole and its ultimate outcome will probably affect the future of the Organization more than any other issue. One important step forward was the adoption last year of resolution 53/30, which established the majority criteria for the adoption of decisions on Council reform.

We hope that, in the coming year, the Working Group will renew its work with the same impetus and transparency with which it left off last July and which enabled the drafting of a very useful revised working document on cluster II items and the adoption of a final report with innovative initiatives.

I wish to conclude by sincerely thanking Mr. Didier Opertti, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, and Ambassadors De Saram of Sri Lanka and Dahlgren of Sweden for the excellent manner in which they led the work of the Working Group in 1999. I wish the President of the General Assembly and the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group every success in the year to come.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): It might be useful to recall the wording of the resolution of the General Assembly with which the whole reform process started. As early as December 1993, the General Assembly recognized

> "the need to review the membership of the Security Council and related matters in view of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially of developing countries, as well as the changes in international relations [and] the need to continue to enhance the efficiency of the Security Council". (*resolution 48/26, fifth and sixth preambular paras.*)

It also requested the Open-ended Working Group established by that same resolution

> "to submit a report on the progress of its work to the General Assembly". (*ibid., para. 2*)

We have to give an honest answer to the question of whether the Working Group has succeeded in implementing its mandate. It is all too obvious that six years of debating have led us into a frustrating stalemate rather than towards new ideas and concepts on how the emerging credibility gap and loss of reputation of the United Nations as a whole, and of the Security Council in particular, can be overcome.

I am sorry to say that the results achieved in six years of intensive discussions are diametrically opposed to the urgency expressed on numerous occasions from this rostrum by a majority of representatives. We have to ask ourselves: will the Millennium Assembly be in a position to give a satisfying answer to its overarching theme of strengthening the United Nations? At a time when this Organization is faced anew with serious challenges to maintaining peace and stability in the world and to providing answers to the global problems of mankind, the inability to act is embarrassing. Let us not waste, but rather grasp the unique opportunity which the forthcoming Millennium Assembly is offering us to make progress in this field.

Three main components for a substantial visionary reform are before us and have been discussed over and over again. First, we need a Security Council which reflects the political, economic and demographic geography of the twenty-first century and which does not remain stuck in the constraints of the post-war era; a Council with the democratic legitimacy to act on behalf of Member States — a point that has already been emphasized by various speakers — which have all conferred upon it primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as laid out in Article 24 of the Charter. This clearly requires an expansion of a system of permanent as well as non-permanent seats on the Security Council and I am glad that so many colleagues have spoken in favour of this concept already. Visionary reform means that we do not allow ourselves to become entangled in a thicket of petty national interests.

Secondly, a Security Council reform is inconceivable without also addressing the question of the reform of the veto. The Council must be capable of acting. Any demonstration of evident incapability to act — for example, during the Kosovo crisis or during the protracted Iraq discussion — must be prevented. We should, in this regard, think pragmatically and not insist on principles; otherwise we will block ourselves and thus play into the hands of those who believe that they can well live with the status quo and who do not want any change. A self-restriction — for example, in the form of an obligation to give an explanation when using the veto — would be a first step in the right direction, as suggested by my Foreign Minister in his speech to this year's General Assembly.

I should like to draw members' attention to the very commendable speech made by our Mexican colleague to

the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council on 21 April 1998, in which he submitted some very interesting historical evidence of the fact that the veto at one time was considered to be undemocratic and an obstacle to the Security Council's efficiency by the same countries which are now among its staunchest supporters.

Improved transparency of the work of the Security Council and a periodic review of any reform package after a predetermined period is the third other indispensable element which has to be tackled. These are general elements which would underline the fact that the Security Council is a body with derived, borrowed authority only, its members acting on behalf of all of us, certainly not to pursue purely national interests, especially when these are quite obviously not in the interest of the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership and may even endanger measures taken to maintain international peace and security. The recent more frequent applications of the so-called "private meeting" format have been encouraging. We need to continue on this path more vigorously. The Security Council must provide a format in which non-members can participate in its deliberations when they can show a genuine interest or are partners in a peacekeeping operation.

The President took the Chair.

Let me add that participation in a discussion, as provided for by rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure, is, in my understanding, more than being invited to sit on the sidelines and have the opportunity to listen to the discussion of others.

The elements for a solution are on the table. However, no text has yet been drafted, and there are no indications that the drafting process is about to begin. Do we lack the political will for reform? I hope not. It is up to the permanent members of the Security Council, in the first place, to clearly state that they are committed to reform. I therefore invite all of them to take the floor in this debate and to explain their position.

I am getting increasingly concerned that another urgent issue might overshadow and further delay the reform discussions in the coming months, and that is the emerging dispute on the scale of assessment. We all support a viable and lasting financial framework for the United Nations in accordance with established legal obligations of Member States, taking into account their economic capacity to make a fair and just contribution. One knows that the lion's share is carried on a few shoulders only. The fact that the combined financial contributions of four permanent members, which hardly equals one third of the combined contribution of two other members who have no influence on the decision-making process of the Council, underlines the lopsidedness of the whole system.

In this context, I would like to refer to a remark made by our colleague from New Zealand this morning. He certainly allows me to quote him. He said:

> "There is also, perhaps, a sense on the part of some of the larger financial contributors that are not permanent members that they deserve more regular or even permanent representation."

This sentence contains one point with which I do not agree — and that is the word "perhaps".

The basic fact remains that a sound and efficient lasting system can only be based on principles of fairness, equal treatment and democratic legitimacy, principles which should guide the reform endeavours regarding the Security Council as well as the United Nations budget.

I would like to encourage you, Mr. President, to keep these principles in mind and, standing at the helm, to boldly steer this Organization into the next millennium.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Mr. President, first let me thank you for calling a debate on this agenda item. Allow me to pay tribute also to the constructive contribution made to the reform debate by your predecessor as General Assembly President, Didier Opertti, and by the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors Dahlgren and de Saram. The United Kingdom looks forward to working closely with you and with the Vice-Chairmen during the coming year.

Security Council reform is a matter which demands our urgent attention. As we enter the twenty-first century, we need to bolster the confidence of the wider membership of the United Nations in the Council. We need to enlarge the Council to reflect the political and economic realities of the modern world. And we need to continue the important work already underway in the Council to improve its working methods. Taken together, these steps will help to reinforce the Council's authority, enabling it to fulfil its primary responsibility for

maintaining international peace and security with the full support of the United Nations membership.

During the Assembly's fifty-third session, Mr. President, your predecessor presided over some significant developments. We reached consensus on voting majorities, laid out in General Assembly resolution 53/30. President Opertti also circulated a questionnaire designed to solicit the views of each and every delegation on key issues relating to Security Council reform. The questionnaire gave rise to some useful, if impassioned, debate. We would encourage you to review the responses it received. They illustrate clearly the importance which a majority of delegations attach to moving the reform process forward, as well as an encouraging communality of views on some important points. We hope that this can serve as a building-block for further work during the fifty-fourth session.

If we are to make progress, we will need to identify those areas in which the United Nations membership can reach general agreement. The responses to your questionnaire confirmed that a significant majority of Member States support expansion in both categories of membership. This seems to the United Kingdom a sensible point from which to start. One of the most important arguments for enlargement is to achieve better representation on the Council for developing countries. Better representation has to include permanent seats. As we have said before, my delegation supports permanent membership for Japan and Germany, and we believe three other new permanent seats should be created for non-industrialized countries.

This is not to ignore other important questions. The working methods of the Council need to be improved. The Council's working group on procedures has been particularly active in this area. This year has seen some important changes, with provision, *inter alia*, for non-members to participate in Council meetings on a wide range of subjects. We will need to ensure that further improvements, which are integral to a workable, satisfactory reform package, move in step with our efforts to enlarge the Council.

Allow me to say a word on the voting rights of the existing permanent members of the Council. The United Kingdom believes that these are essential, both to the authority of the Security Council and to its ability to function effectively. They ensure that its decisions will be implemented with resolve and determination. The United Kingdom is therefore firmly opposed to any restrictions on these rights. However, we recognize fully our responsibilities under the Charter and are committed to working for consensus in the Council wherever possible, as this year's events have shown. We will continue to exercise our voting rights with restraint, in a manner consistent with our obligations under the Charter. We are ready to participate in further discussion of this subject.

The challenge we are facing is clear. The Council must remain an effective and efficient body, able to carry out its primary responsibility under the Charter to maintain international peace and security. At the same time, to preserve and enhance its credibility and authority, it must be made more representative of the wider United Nations membership.

The United Kingdom believes it should be possible, during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, to take the first steps towards general agreement on a process of reform which safeguards these requirements.

My response to the previous speaker is that the United Kingdom is committed to assisting you, Mr. President, and the Vice-Chairmen in efforts to this end.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): We are gathered here once again to discuss Security Council reform. But what is there left to say that has not already been said in the six years that we have been considering this matter?

We all know what is being asked of us — to consider the question of equitable representation in and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters. This last part of our task relates in particular to the working methods of the Council, the transparency of its work and particularly the decision-making process, including the exercise of the right of veto.

I need hardly recall General Assembly 48/26 of 3 December 1993, which established our Open-ended Working Group and, in its fifth preambular paragraph, invited us in reforming the Security Council to bear in mind

> "the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially of developing countries, as well as the changes in international relations".

In other words, the resolution that set up our Working Group asks us to bear in mind, in working to

reform the Council, the substantial number of United Nations Member States that are from developing regions and are under-represented, or not represented at all, in the current Security Council, particularly at the decision-making level, and it calls on us to correct the situation. In this connection, my delegation would emphasize that the African position of two permanent seats should not be minimized.

Resolution 48/26 also states that in working to reform the Security Council we should continue to enhance its effectiveness without disregarding the principle of the sovereign equality of all Members of the Organization, and that the final outcome of our work should be supported by a general agreement. In resolution 53/30 of 23 November 1998, the General Assembly resolved not to adopt any resolution or decision on the question of the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Council and related matters, without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of the General Assembly.

That is the legal framework for our work and its expected outcome. In the six years that we have been involved in this process, we have become acquainted with the various positions of most of the Member States, or groups of States — developed or developing — which wish to become members of the Security Council, principally of its most important category — the permanent membership.

With respect to the working methods of the Council and the transparency of its work, it must be acknowledged that the agreement reached on the efforts needed to enhance this aspect of the Council's activities has already been spoken of at length by most members of the Working Group, including the principal members of the Security Council — that is to say, the permanent members. We must pay tribute to their open-mindedness, despite the reluctance they have shown when it comes to certain proposals aimed at institutionalizing the status quo.

That part of the working methods relating to the decision-making process, including the exercise of the veto right, which is the central focus of efforts to reform the Security Council, remains a stumbling block, as there are differences of opinion, even conflicting views, on this point. The question of the arrogation of the right of veto to future permanent members and of the modalities for using the veto in general have not yet been satisfactorily answered for most members of the Working Group.

There are three basic positions on the question of the veto. The first, held by those that currently enjoy the veto right, holds that we should not touch that right, which is a specific prerogative of the permanent members.

The second position, which appears to have the support of a large number of States, calls for amending the Charter to limit the use of the veto, pending its total abolition on the grounds that it is anachronistic and anti-democratic in an Organization like the United Nations, where the primary principle is the sovereign equality of all of its Members and where the virtues of democracy are defended in all areas.

The third position is the idea of a unilateral commitment by permanent members to seek consensus within the Security Council, to have recourse to the veto only in accordance with their responsibilities under the Charter and to explain the grounds leading to the use of the veto.

It will no doubt have been noted that the various issues before us for consideration and action in connection with Security Council reform are very closely interrelated. For example, consideration of the decision-making process in the Security Council is linked to the membership and the size of an expanded Council. But how can we speak about an expanded Council when we do not know the final membership or size of the future Security Council? In other words, the various issues that, for the sake of methodology, we have grouped in clusters I and II are in fact interdependent.

While it is true that we have agreed to enhance the working methods of the Council and to impose some transparency on its work and activities, we nevertheless must recognize that it will not be possible to reach final agreement on its decision-making mechanisms until we have decided on the number of new members and their status.

What is important to note at this point, in the view of my delegation, is that we find ourselves deadlocked. Positions do not seem to have evolved, at least so far. The situation is understandable because of the complexity of the problems posed by a genuine and objective reform of the Security Council; the interests that are at stake; and the quite understandable feelings of the various actors — depending on whether they think they will gain or lose in a reformed Council — on the question of re-

establishing equity, representativity and legitimacy in the international community.

Despite these divergent, if not conflicting, positions, we absolutely must reform the Security Council in order to adapt it to the new context of the democratization of nations and of international relations and above all to enable it effectively and legitimately to play its role as set out in the Charter.

Actually, this is a point that all members of the Working Group agree on. In fact, most of the delegations present here have agreed from the very beginning of our work that reform of the Security Council is a paramount element in the streamlining of the United Nations and that the membership of the Council should reflect the evolution of the needs of the international community and the realities of the world today.

Apart from this common, widely expressed desire for change, we have to confess that implementing the modalities has proven difficult if not impossible. Of course, we have to note the nuances in this rather pessimistic view of our work, for discussions during the recent deliberations nevertheless did show some progress, thanks to the adoption of a strategy which would proceed step by step.

The first step consisted of defining the framework of a general agreement; that is the *raison d'etre* of General Assembly resolution 53/30 of 23 November 1998. The second step, according to my delegation, should lead us in principle, following agreement, to the election of candidates for the new permanent seats, which could be for States or for representatives of regional areas, according to the criteria agreed on. The third and last phase would include amendments to the Charter to adapt it to the changes.

This step-by-step strategy seems to us an interesting one because it has the advantage of giving Member States enough time to forge an agreement acceptable to at least two thirds of the members of the General Assembly.

If the first step, defining a framework for a general agreement, has been completed, that is not the case of the other two, which have not yet even been begun because of the very large differences among the Member States.

As you can see, Mr. President, the Working Group is far from completing its work on the question of the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/26.

Of course, we have been working ever since the Working Group was established, but we still have a lot of work to do. Given that reality, my delegation can only call on the Group to continue its dialogue and its efforts to reach agreement, in other words, to continue the discussions, as we were invited to do by last year's General Assembly resolution, which sanctioned our work. Let us be realistic and avoid rushing ahead, for the question of reforming this executive body of the United Nations is fundamental to the United Nations of the twenty-first century. Let us with justice and equity tackle the most basic aspects of reform, namely the membership and the size of a reformed Council and especially the issue of the veto.

As an African delegation, and taking account of the African common position, Côte d'Ivoire would like expansion to occur in both categories, with the creation of new non-permanent and permanent seats, enough to have true representativeness of the international community within the reformed Council. Naturally, as a matter of for justice, we believe that Africa's aspirations should be taken seriously and should be given the attention they require. My delegation also favours seeking more extensive improvement in the working methods and effectiveness in decision-making in the reformed Security Council. At this point, my delegation would sincerely dispute those who, without saying so openly, feel that Africa is not yet ready or not democratic enough to be given, along with two permanent members, the right of veto.

Reform of the Security Council raises questions among many delegations and even outside of the United Nations, but it also elicits hope. Hence, our appeal for prudence, so that we do not disappoint the optimists. Let us hurry slowly, as they say.

In the event that we have to do something to demonstrate our will to move ahead, my delegation would have no problem in giving serious consideration to the fall-back position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which is to increase for the time being the number of members in the non-permanent category in the Council. The other possibility would be to continue consideration of improving working methods, which we have not yet completed.

In any event, we endorse the statement by Algeria, and that to be made later by Cameroon on behalf of Africa. We are prepared to make our modest contribution to the work of the Working Group, but we would emphasize that progress in our discussions, and their conclusion, will depend on the extent to which we can conduct them in a spirit of dialogue and justice and with the will to eventually have an Organization which is looking towards the future in the interest of all peoples of the world.

These are the feelings of my delegation at this time as you, Mr. President, seek to resume our work on this issue.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The topic we are considering today is from a political and institutional point of view one of the most important for the future of the United Nations. All of us are aware of the growing complexity that international relations have taken on recently and with it the need to ensure and to strengthen the leadership of the Organization.

The United Nations has no substitute as a focal point for dialogue, cooperation and the promotion of a legal order capable of consolidating, among other important challenges, those of international peace and security. This means, as a matter of priority, that the Organization has to concentrate its efforts to ensure the confidence of its Member States in its own institutions in order to be able to have in each of its main spheres of responsibility organs whose representativeness, mandate and capacity reflect not only shared values, but also commitments to collective action for their defense and promotion.

For Venezuela, a country convinced of the benefits of an international order in which multilateralism prevails, the adjustment of the United Nations to current times must be directed towards updating its organs and working methods. In this twin effort, the Organization must above all be guided by the basic principles of the sovereign equality of all States and respect for the undeniable right of all to equitable representation in the main organs of limited representation within the Organization. Furthermore, greater transparency must be fostered in the work of these organs. These principles are ultimately the sources of the representativeness and authority of each of the organs in discharging their specific responsibilities.

In the process of reforming and expanding the Security Council, all of these elements take on a critical importance. Clearly this is a process leading to reforms of the Charter and, as such, must lead to a result that is politically and diplomatically viable, as well as stable in the long term. All of the efforts and all of the time invested in them will be rewarded if we know how to constantly keep in mind the final objective of ensuring that Member States can have their positions taken into account, their interests and their rights respected, and that the international community can have its collective interests protected and promoted in an objective and balanced way.

During the fifty-third session, the Working Group was able to study in greater detail the complexities and difficulties of reform and expansion of the Security Council. My delegation supports the procedure that was followed. The report before the Assembly also gives a full account of the progress made as well as of the issues unresolved, recognizing — in light of the responses of the Member States in the political statements that make up part of the support documents of the Working Group — that we still need greater efforts to reach the necessary consensus in all spheres of the mandate as well as with respect to their interrelationship and mutual balance.

Without going into detail about the results that were achieved, let me say that we share the viewpoint that on the whole it has been a productive exercise. Given the announced results — in particular the progress cited in the report's chapter III, on general observations, and the subsequent contributions of the Member States — we will have to continue working during the current session to focus our consultations on increasingly specific elements of the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

We feel that open dialogue and ongoing consultations are still indispensable for the success of the process. Member States must continuously assess the situation as well as the progress that has been made towards achieving our objectives. We also have to continue this examination in our respective forums and consultative mechanisms in order to continue building the desired consensus for future stages.

We hope that the presidency will be as open as possible to dialogue when the Working Group resumes its efforts, and that it will be as receptive as possible to the contributions of Member States on the issues the Working Group has been considering. In particular, as would be suggested by an objective assessment of the results of six years of deliberations, there is an urgent need to see to increasing the number of non-permanent members in the Council and to restricting the power of the veto. In addition, we hope that under your presidency, Sir, the authority of the Working Group of the General Assembly

will be strengthened and consolidated, not only with respect to the expansion of the Security Council but also with respect to its working methods.

In concluding, my delegation would also like to extend our country's gratitude to the President of the fifty-third session and Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, for the skill with which he conducted the Group's deliberations. We also thank the Vice-Presidents, Ambassadors Dahlgren of Sweden and de Saram of Sri Lanka.

We hope that during your tenure, Sir, we will be able to make progress, within the Working Group towards reaching the essential consensuses. We assure you of our willingness to cooperate with you in a trustworthy and constructive manner so that you can fulfil the delicate responsibility that the Member States have conferred upon you.

Mr. Tudela (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, for his tireless efforts on and dedication to this issue during the last session of the Assembly. We would also like to express our gratitude to Ambassadors Hans Dahlgren of Sweden and John de Saram of Sri Lanka, the Vice-Chairmen of this Working Group.

We believe that the reform of the Security Council should be directed in such a way as to make the United Nations a more representative and efficient organization. Therefore our debates should be guided by a will to find common grounds; they should not be the source of greater differences and confrontation. It is necessary to combine our efforts so that the Organization will have the necessary means to meet the real needs of all of the Member States. The delegation of Peru will continue to provide its determined support to the achievement of this objective.

Given the current reality, we feel that it is necessary to move towards a general and comprehensive agreement on the reform of the Security Council. We believe resolution 53/30, adopted on 23 November 1998, is a substantive step in the right direction. The process in which we are engaged should preserve a careful balance among all of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the topic. Issues regarding the composition and size of the Security Council, its decision-making process — including the matter of the veto — and the measures undertaken to modernize or democratize the Council should all be interrelated.

We all agree that it is both necessary and urgent to strengthen the capacity and the effectiveness of the Council, increase its representativeness and improve the efficiency and transparency of its working methods. This has been reflected in the general observations of the latest report of the Working Group. However, it is also important to point out that in and of itself an increase in the membership of the Council will not be sufficient to achieve effective and efficient reform of the Council.

Peru would like to recall here that the primary responsibilities of the Council, centralized in its 15 members, result from the delegation of powers by the Members of the Organization, and thus there is a symmetrical relationship of duties and rights. It is important that the Member States on the Security Council not forget that they have received a mandate for which they are accountable and that this mandate should be carried out in a serious and responsible way that adheres strictly to the law and conforms to the principles and obligations established in the Charter of the United Nations, rather than responding to particular national interests.

Thus the Security Council cannot abdicate — either by its actions or by omission — its fundamental responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Further, the use of force in disregard of the competence of the Security Council also calls into question the mechanism of collective security that is enshrined in the Charter. The inability or weakness of the Council to act when necessary affects the international community as a whole.

My delegation has pointed out on previous occasions the position that guides us with respect to the features that should be included in a reform of the Security Council. In order to guarantee the representativeness and legitimacy of the Council, we feel that the two membership categories should be expanded, bringing in as permanent members developed countries as well as countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, so that the enlarged Council would be strengthened and have equitable representation.

The composition of the Security Council and the veto are provisional exceptions to the principle of

sovereignty equality, justified and accepted 54 years ago because of the need to effectively guarantee international peace.

Our final objective is to eliminate the veto, and until that is possible, we want to limit the scope of its application as much as possible. This power should be limited to actions taken by the Council under Chapter VII of the Charter. We also concur with the proposal that if we do not reach agreement on an increase in the number of permanent members, we should work for the time being on increasing the number of non-permanent members. However, as we have said on prior occasions, we do not believe that the time is ripe for that. Rather, we believe that after the development over several years of this process, on which the positions of the States have been duly expressed, we now have to move decisively, into a concrete negotiating process. We believe it would not be beneficial to establish or create new categories or classes of members, as this would simply engender greater disparity within the Organization.

With respect to the specific number of members that a newly expanded Security Council can have, we consider that we should maintain the existing proportions of the two existing categories. We believe that a periodic review process of the permanent membership is fitting and should be established.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the primary aim of this Organization, as provided in Article I of the Charter, and it is a constant wish and concern of all the nations represented here. In order to be able to tackle these responsibilities in the best way possible, we must enhance transparency and improve the Council's working methods, especially the relationship between that organ and the Member States of the United Nations. Therefore, we believe that the provisional rules of procedure of the Council and other internal measures that have already been adopted should be institutionalized and further consolidated in order to guarantee their transparent and systematic application.

We agree with the call for the informal consultations of the Security Council to be the exception rather than the unwritten rule that currently prevails. We recognize the need for confidentiality at certain times in Council consultations, but we are also aware that only greater openness and transparency in its decisions will give that organ the credibility and respectability it asks for. For that reason we believe it is essential to have more fluid dialogue and participation, in the form of special meetings within the Security Council with the representatives of countries involved in or affected by armed conflict, as well as with the representatives of regional organizations that are actively participating in the search for a solution. This would make it possible to activate these actors' ability to understand and clarify the specific situation in question. Peru believes it is essential that the Security Council always act transparently in its activities and in its decision-making.

We are aware of the primary role conferred upon the Security Council by the Charter of the Organization, and for that reason we want its potential to be fulfilled to the utmost. We realize that the success of the Security Council in its actions represents nothing less than the success of the Organization as a whole. The adoption by consensus of resolution 53/30 proves once again that with realism, flexibility and political will we can make progress. In that same spirit, we must move to the attainment of the general, legitimate and comprehensive agreement that we seek.

Ms. Grčić Polić (Croatia): The question of reform and expansion of the Security Council has increasingly been perceived by many delegations as the mother of all questions at the current stage of development of the Organization. At the same time, in the Organization's corridors, this question has been associated on and off over the years with so-called fatigue syndrome. The fact that we are discussing it today in such numbers in the plenary Assembly is therefore a good sign.

The matters of equitable representation, credibility, democratic conduct and effectiveness of the Council are too important to be surrendered to defeatist fatigue. Defeat is simply impermissible. All Member States owe it to their constituencies to study the complex issues involved in this matter and then voice its position for the record. As long as their positions are not put on the record they will remain disenfranchised.

The fundamentals of the post-Second World War security world order have been set by the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, and in particular by its provisions regarding the composition and operation of the Security Council. Ever since, with, essentially, only slight adjustments, that world order has been characterized by an effective balance of power among the five members States that hold, and therefore are exempt from, the Council's veto power. Some observers purport that this is precisely the reason why the United Nations, unlike its

egalitarian predecessor, the League of Nations, is still around.

Others question both the longevity and the capacity for practical effectiveness of such an arrangement if frozen in time. The world has changed since 1945 in many respects, in terms of demographics, technology, polities and markets. In many places around the globe these changes have been so profound that they have affected the very fabric of daily life, including the ways we relate to one another as individuals, communities, peoples and nations.

Why is it, then, that we find it so difficult to reflect these changes in the structure and operation of this, as we like to call it, one and only universal Organization, and in particular, of its most visible principal organ? Is it because of the entrenched interests and passions, often legitimized by calcified ideologies that no longer fit present realities? Or is it simply because we lack trust in the Organization or in one another? Or shall we blame bureaucratic inertia, which is often used as a refuge within complex organizations?

Despite all of these unattractive questions, in the past year we have been witnessing an emerging and broad-based agreement on the fundamental elements in the debate on the Security Council. These elements are, the Security Council lacks credible representation, the Security Council is threatened by an erosion of legitimacy and effectiveness and the Security Council suffers from some arcane and non-transparent working methods. Therefore, the Council must be enlarged in both categories of membership. The enlargement should reflect the changes that have taken place in international affairs, and the Council's working methods must be further democratized and made accountable. Croatia believes that only enlargement in both categories of membership will introduce a difference into the operation of the Council that will indeed make a difference in terms of the existing imbalances and inequities. In turn, this will have a positive impact on its lack of credibility and eroding legitimacy — and therefore, yes, on its very effectiveness.

Regarding possible rotation in the permanent posts, we feel that it is entirely up to the regions to come up with their own arrangements, provided that each Member State consents to such an arrangement of its own free will. We hold that five new permanent seats should be created, out of which two should be allocated to the industrialized countries and three to developing countries. We believe that responsible involvement in international affairs at the regional and global level, as well as the demonstrated capacity and willingness to shoulder related duties, including financial ones, should be an important selection criterion. Regarding the allocation of non-permanent seats, we hold that out of four such seats one should go to Africa, one to Asia, one to Latin America and the Caribbean and one to the Eastern European region.

Croatia favours the abolition of the veto. If, however, this is not possible, as a fall-back position we support the use of the so-called double veto. In the interim, Croatia holds that all permanent members should have the same rights and obligations. Some permanent members, though, may choose to pursue a course of conduct by which they would demonstrate their awareness of the widely shared views regarding the unpopularity of the veto and thereby show their respect for the democratic majority that holds such views.

Regarding the numerical thresholds for Security Council expansion, Croatia has been on record for some time now as favouring expansion up to 24 seats. This, however, is not carved in stone. Croatia further holds that the issue of periodic review must be a part of the reform package because it provides a democratic mechanism to enforce accountability. Likewise, the Council's methods must be further democratized. In this regard, we wish to commend some past and present non-permanent Council members, such as Sweden, Canada, Malaysia and Slovenia, for championing transparency and innovative working formats during their respective presidencies. We are also heartened to see that the current President, the United Kingdom, is actively embracing such practices. May they continue in that direction.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, Sir, please allow me to thank you for convening these meetings of the General Assembly to consider the question of Security Council reform. We are confident that under your guidance our consideration of this matter at this session will be more fruitful.

The Chinese delegation has stressed on many occasions that proper expansion of the membership of the Security Council and improvement of the Council's working method will allow that body to better perform its noble responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, as entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations, and will help maintain and strengthen the important role of the United Nations in international affairs. Over two thirds of the 188 States Members of the Organization are developing countries, whose collective

strength and influence in international affairs are constantly on the rise. That fact should be reflected in the composition of the Security Council, which is one of the core bodies of the United Nations system. This is dictated by contemporary reality and by current developments.

The fact is that developing countries are seriously under-represented on the Security Council. To address this problem as a priority issue on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical representation is thus the core of Council reform. Such reform cannot be deemed a success if the resulting expansion of the Council does not, first and foremost, strengthen the representation of developing countries and attain balance between the representation of developed and developing countries. Such an outcome would not be accepted by the vast number of developing countries, including China. We are pleased to see that after years of strenuous efforts by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, the idea of enhanced representation on the Council for developing countries has gained general acceptance and support. This consensus was reflected in the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/53/47) submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It is our hope that in the next phase of its work, the Open-ended Working Group will discuss this core issue in even greater depth.

The Chinese delegation has always maintained that efforts towards expansion of the Council should not be bound by any imposed time limits. A sense of urgency is necessary in reforming the Council, but there should be no haste. Reform of the Security Council bears on the major interests of every country, and significant differences on key issues still remain among the various sides. It is unrealistic to think that reform can be finished overnight. The result of such rushed reform would hardly be able to stand the test of history. We hope that all Member States will work towards consensus by continuing to engage in patient and thorough discussions and consultations in the Open-ended Working Group on the various proposals and suggestions, in the spirit of making the reform fair and reasonable, keeping the process open and transparent and giving consideration to the views of all sides. Only in that way can we minimize confrontation, ensure the greatest possible representation of the will of the greatest number of Member States in a reformed Security Council, and enable the Council to better carry out the major responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter.

Another important aspect of reform of the Security Council is to improve its working methods and to enhance the transparency of its work with a view to allowing Member States to understand better and participate more in the work of the Council. In recent years there has been constant improvement in the working methods of the Council. The informal Security Council working group concerning documentation and other procedural questions has made enormous efforts in that direction, while the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on reform of the Security Council has also put forward a number of useful proposals which have helped further improve the work of the Council. We believe that reform of the working methods of the Security Council is a work in progress and is the object of ongoing refinement. We hope that continued progress will be made without jeopardizing the efficiency of the work of the Council. As a Council member, China is ready to join the great number of other Member States in discussions on improving the Council's working methods and enhancing the transparency of its work.

Mr. Galuška (Czech Republic): Let me first highly commend the support of the President of the General Assembly for opening the debate on this crucial agenda item before we adjourn our autumn session and, indeed, before we cross the threshold of the new millennium. Any other decision could have been interpreted as downplaying the importance of Security Council reform and would have compromised the expectations of the world community, which shares the belief that the Security Council should reflect the realities of the contemporary world. Yes, we must keep the reform agenda alive, at least, and we must spare no effort to push it forward.

Since the very outset of our current round of reform deliberations, the Czech Republic has been known as a reform-minded country. We have taken numerous opportunities to reiterate and reinforce our position, the backbone of which can be summarized as follows.

As to the size and composition of the Security Council, we believe that current global realities would be most appropriately reflected through the enlargement of the Security Council in both categories. Our choice would be five additional permanent seats and four or five additional non-permanent seats, including one for Eastern Europe. We respect the option of rotating the permanent seats of specific regions, but no country or region should be forced into such a scheme.

As to the question of the veto, we continue to favour some reduction of areas where the veto can be applied, possibly through individual commitments by permanent members, and other steps which do not necessarily require Charter amendments, as suggested in a proposal of 25 June 1998.

In the area of Security Council working methods, we generally welcome and support any motion towards greater openness and transparency. Here, we have recently noticed with appreciation some remarkable improvements as the Council members opened their deliberations on a more frequent basis and the new idea of open briefings came to life. Although a lot of issues have not been addressed yet, there seems to be real will to do more, especially on the part of some non-permanent members of the Security Council. They have our full support and we encourage them to continue their efforts. The next step is to turn these rather ad hoc arrangements into permanent ones.

Unfortunately, apart from on cluster II, we have seen little or no progress for a couple of years and this is an increasingly embarrassing observation. The stalled discussions on cluster I, in the face of new challenges — including the Kosovo crisis and the humanitarian intervention agenda — tend to undermine the credibility of the whole United Nations. There were some encouraging signs in this regard — among others, the joint statement of 23 September 1999 by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Council — but much more has to be done and in more concrete terms. It does not seem to be unfair to expect some leadership from the countries which enjoy important privileges under the Charter — not leadership towards stalling, but leadership towards genuine reform action.

We also rely heavily on the President of the General Assembly to energize this community of nations and, by capturing the momentum of the new millennium, to create an atmosphere conducive to the reform, so that the Millennium Summit may already see the emerging new world order.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): The international community has witnessed this year an increasing demand for Security Council actions. This reflects the fact that, when facing crisis, it is to the Security Council that the world looks for meaningful answers. More than ever, the Security Council needs to be perceived as a body with prestige, legitimacy and authority. Additionally, the complexity and magnitude of the tasks faced by the Security Council, especially when confronted with a much-criticized paralysis due to its methods of work, further strengthen the cause of Security Council reform.

As we engaged in this exercise six years ago, the General Assembly was inspired, as it continues to be today, by the idea that, by making the Security Council more representative and accountable, we would increase its legitimacy and authority. Despite the divergent views that persist in our approach to that common goal, the body of discussions held in the Open-ended Working Group reaffirmed our basic objective. In the same vein, the recent debate on the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization emphasized the need to ensure that the Security Council's actions truly reflect the aspirations of the international community.

Recent challenges to the United Nations authority in the field of peace and security and the widespread perception that the Council decreasingly mirrors the will of the majority of United Nations Members reinforce, I repeat, the urgency of Security Council reform.

A major step forward in our efforts was taken last year with the adoption by consensus of resolution 53/30, by which the General Assembly expressed its determination not to adopt any resolution or decision on the questions before us without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of its members. The resolution establishes a high standard for the concept of general agreement in decisions pertaining to equitable representation, increase in the membership and the methods of work of the Security Council. Moreover, it puts aside the spectrum of a reform package insufficiently negotiated and therefore not responsive to the genuine interests of the majority.

As we look ahead to the resumption of the Working Group's activities, we cannot indulge in the repetition of another round of exploratory discussions. In our view, the extensive work carried out so far in six years of discussions has already laid the foundations for an initial set of conclusions to be drawn. We therefore consider that there should not be yet another general debate by the Working Group, but rather an effort to pursue general agreement on specific proposals covering both cluster I and cluster II issues, based on the views already expressed. This effort will need to concentrate on those ideas that are capable of meeting the requirement set in resolution 53/30. To that purpose, we strongly encourage the Chairman of the Working Group and his two Vice-Chairmen to further explore the acceptability of

those ideas already proved to be widely shared by the great majority of the membership.

From the Brazilian perspective, the central purpose of the reform is the question of the expansion — or, more precisely, equitable representation on and increase in the membership — of the Security Council. At the same time, we must address the working methods and the question of transparency. On this particular cluster, the Working Group is already achieving a focused convergence of views and, to some extent, the Security Council itself is contributing to this process by resorting to more frequent open meetings.

But we should not lose sight of the fact that a real improvement in the way the Council conducts its business will be possible only if its composition is made more equitable and representative. Equitable representation can come about only through an enlargement of both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent. While the total membership of the Council does not reflect adequate representation of developing countries, it is precisely in the permanent category that this imbalance is even more clear and inequitable. Any expansion that maintains or aggravates the present imbalance would discriminate against developing countries and fail to meet the requirement of equitable representation. Brazil also does not favour the creation of new categories of membership in the Security Council. We therefore rule out the paradoxical idea of permanent rotating seats.

The question of the total size is of paramount importance. A Council with more equitable representation will not be possible unless we contemplate a figure in the mid-20s. We also hold the view that a reform package should include some curtailment of the veto power. The ideal is to advance towards the gradual elimination of the veto. As a first step, it should be strictly limited to matters covered under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Nevertheless, the question of the veto should not hold back a possible agreement on the increase in the membership. This could be facilitated if, while enjoying *de jure* veto rights, new permanent members would commit themselves not to use them.

This brings me to my final remark, on periodic review. As a confidence-building measure to promote convergence of views in other areas, we should endeavour to reach an early agreement on a specific number of years after which the reform would be reviewed. This would make it clear that, by reforming the composition of the Council, we are trying to democratize it in a world in transition and that the door remains open for future adjustments.

Lastly, let me assure you Mr. President, of my delegation's full confidence that your keen sense of diplomacy and skills will move this process ahead. We look forward to working closely with you and the Vice-Chairmen when we resume the Working Group's activities next year. Our ability to make strides in this very important task is very much dependent on the leadership and energy brought to bear by the Bureau. We wish, finally, to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Foreign Minister Didier Opertti, and to the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka and Sweden for the positive manner in which they conducted the work of the Working Group this year.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): For the twenty-first consecutive time, the General Assembly has included this item on its agenda. During previous sessions, in particular after the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group in 1993, there has been much debate, and several proposals have been submitted. Issues have been visited and revisited, time and time again, in such a way that we might be led to conclude that nothing new is left to say. This situation only reflects the difficulty of the subject. However, we must not give up.

The reform of the Security Council is an essential task for the future of the United Nations, in order to enable it to face new challenges of international life. We must therefore pursue our efforts to move this process ahead. We count on you, Mr. President, to lead this process forward and actively to guide our work. You can always count on the full support of my delegation in this regard.

During its last session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution establishing that a majority of two thirds of the members of the Assembly is required for any decision on the reform of the Security Council. Allow me here to pay tribute to the former President, Mr. Didier Opertti, for this achievement; it was a major step towards reinforcing the principle of representativity in this Organization.

Also during its last session, the President of the General Assembly launched an appeal to delegations in the Open-ended Working Group to make their views known on the most important issues of Security Council reform. My delegation, together with a large number of

others, responded to this appeal in writing, as well as orally. It is important that these efforts and the momentum created not be lost. It is necessary to identify the points of convergence resulting from the replies and emerging trends in order to build general agreement on specific issues and to be able to move forward. To this end, it is important to continue encouraging the submission of responses by the largest possible number of delegations.

Portugal does not favour reform just for the sake of reform. Portugal favours a reform that responds in appropriate terms to the current needs of the international community, in order to enable the Security Council better to deal with the conflict situations confronting the world today. It needs a Council that is more representative, more accountable to the general membership and more efficient than the existing one — a Council whose authority would be viewed and respected by the international community as legitimate.

To meet these goals, Portugal has supported the set of proposals shared by a group of countries with similar concerns. This group of 10 countries, the G-10, in which Portugal takes part, has tried to contribute positively to the work of the Open-ended Working Group, submitting concrete proposals and participating actively in the debate under clusters I and II.

Allow me to refer briefly to three aspects of these clusters on which, I believe, we can work further to find common ground. First is the question of expansion. Portugal believes it is desirable to have an expansion in both categories. Only in this way can the Security Council respond adequately to the international community's current needs, which, as is widely recognized, have changed considerably since the Charter's adoption in 1945.

According to resolution 48/26, which sets the framework for Security Council reform, the expansion of the Council's membership has to take into consideration the need to remedy the existing inadequate representation of developing countries and the changes that have occurred in international relations — changes that the existing Council does not reflect in any way. If we wish to address all these elements, we cannot do so adequately in one category only. We have to envisage balancing and reflecting these aspects in both categories. To increase only the number of non-permanent members would increase the imbalance in the composition of the Council and relations among members and in categories of members.

Secondly, Portugal supports the establishment of mechanisms that would provide for a periodic review of decisions taken in all aspects of Security Council reform, as was underlined just a few minutes ago by my colleague from Brazil. The periodic review, the time-frame of which could be set between 10 and 15 years, should allow for the adjustment of the Security Council in accordance with the interests of the international community and the United Nations at the time of the review. This would substantially increase the accountability of the Council, as well as the responsibility of its members, in particular the new permanent members, to the general membership.

Finally, on the question of working methods, much has been achieved during previous General Assembly sessions. I would like to praise our Vice-Chairmen, whose work and leadership I very much hope will continue. But there is still much more to be done. The discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on measures to enhance the transparency of the Security Council seem to have a particular influence in the decisions taken by the Council itself.

As we have always stated, the most effective way to improve working methods is through a gradual step-by-step approach rather than by engaging in an abstract exercise. That is why pressure from the membership is important in the process of Council reform. The role of Council members is also very important in this regard. I recall the initiative taken during last month's presidency to make information available on the Internet concerning the daily activities of the Council, including statements to the press; this seems to have started a new practice to be followed by other presidencies.

Briefings by presidencies to delegations, held immediately after consultations, are standard practice today — a practice that my country started during its presidency. Almost every day during recent months it has been possible to hear the current President of the Security Council brief interested delegations immediately following the adjournment of consultations.

On the work of the sanctions committees, much has also been improved as a result of the initiative of Council members. I refer to a note by the Council President dated 29 January of this year, containing practical proposals to improve the work of the sanctions committees, which resulted from an initiative by the Council members who chaired the sanctions committees. I also wish to refer to the more recent initiatives taken by the Chairman of the

sanctions Committee on Angola to enhance the efficacy of the sanctions imposed by the Security Council on Jonas Savimbi and UNITA.

The Council is holding more frequent public meetings to consider thematic issues and specific situations. Yesterday's meeting on Africa served as an example of how useful and important these meetings can become to stimulate collective reflection and inform subsequent action by the Council. There is also an emerging trend of holding private meetings instead of consultations, thus ensuring that records are kept, enabling interested delegations to participate, in accordance with the rules of procedure.

All of these signs reflect the importance of the debate in the Open-ended Working Group and its positive influence on the working methods of the Security Council. They reflect also the initiative of Council members, in particular those of the elected members, to open that body to the participation of the general membership, to enhance its transparency in a continuous effort, passing the baton from one to another at the end of their mandates.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish at the outset to convey our appreciation and gratitude to the former Bureau of the Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council for its outstanding work over the past year, and in particular to the Chairman of the Working Group and his two Vice-Chairmen for their leadership and patience during the discussions of the Working Group during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, we are pleased that you are guiding our deliberations on this critically important issue at this session. We have full confidence in your diplomatic skills and in your commitment to see our deliberations to a successful conclusion, which would further strengthen our Organization in general and the Security Council in particular.

During the past six years, almost all aspects of the issues related to Security Council reform and its political, legal and structural implications have been discussed. This interchange and the number of speakers under this item at the present session make it clear that the question of Security Council reform, which involves a reorientation of international relations in general and of the United Nations in particular, is a matter of great interest to the general membership of the United Nations and, as such, deserves to be deliberated in a comprehensive manner and with a great deal of patience and wisdom.

The objective of the reform process is, and must remain, to make the Council more representative and more democratic, thereby helping to strengthen the effectiveness and the authority not only of the Security Council but also of the United Nations as a whole. Therefore we must take into account the dramatic developments that have taken place since the creation of our Organization more than 50 years ago, such as the end of the colonial era, which resulted in an increase in the number and influence of the developing countries, and the end of the cold war.

The concerns and interests of the developing countries, whuich represent the majority of Member States of our Organization, are not fully considered in the Security Council, although all of the questions before this organ concern them first and foremost. Indeed, everyone agrees that the composition and current structure of the Council, which emerged mainly from the state of the world in 1945, have become obsolete and anachronistic and do not reflect the political and economic realities of our era.

On the whole, my delegation, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, favours, along with many others, a mechanism that would bring the Council in line with the prevailing international situation, thereby further enhancing the authority, legitimacy and representativeness of a reformed Security Council. The in-depth debates that have taken place this year in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform have proved that while there is some convergence of views on such issues as the Council's working methods, there remain profound differences on such substantial matters as the size and composition of the Security Council and the right of veto. In other words, the fundamental question of how to advance from the Security Council we have now to an organ that is more representative and transparent, but not less efficient, has yet to be answered.

It is clearly frustrating, therefore, that the consideration accorded to this issue for some years has not given rise to the desired progress nor to any compromise leading to a general agreement, thereby demonstrating the great difficulty inherent in this exercise. Many of us, including my own delegation, find it difficult to guard against disappointment at the apparent stalemate in the work of the Working Group. Nevertheless, it seems essential to us that the interests of

all States and regions be seriously considered in this unprecedented and historic exercise, which, by virtue of its crucial importance for the future of our Organization and international relations, should not be held captive to a predetermined timetable. Furthermore, any attempt to impose a premature, hasty decision would risk doing harm to the integrity of this very delicate process.

Discussions in the Working Group on the expansion of the Council have demonstrated that there are differing views among States, particularly with regard to increasing the number of permanent members of the Council. Several problems have emerged that impede agreement on these issues for the present. The Non-Aligned Movement, comprising 115 Member States — approximately two thirds of the membership of the Organization — is now represented on the Council by only five non-permanent members. We think that any review of the membership should take the current imbalance in representation on the Council into account and that reform should be carried out on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

In this regard, we confirm the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which calls for a membership increase of no less than 11 States. Here I wish to reaffirm the fallback position maintained by the Non-Aligned Movement, namely that if agreement is not reached regarding categories of membership, then the expansion should be limited, for the present, to the non-permanent seats. This does not preclude the possibility of continuing discussions on ideas relating to expansion of the other categories, which should proceed in an objective manner with a view to reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

In this context, I wish to refer to the inaugural address of the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the eighth session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Tehran, which stated that the Islamic countries, representing around 1 billion people, should acquire a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council with the same privileges enjoyed by the current permanent members. Onthe other hand, in our opinion, the new realities of the international community require that the Council adopt more democratic rules.

Therefore we believe that it is time to take action to curtail the use of the veto power which only for certain temporary historical reasons was acquired by a limited number of Powers. Fifty-four years have elapsed since the establishment of the United Nations and the creation of this unjustifiable power. Currently the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations continue to express dissatisfaction about the use of the veto in the decision-making process in the Security Council and they call for limited the use of the veto only for decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter with a view to its eventual elimination has received the overwhelming support of the general membership.

Accordingly, the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement have called for a review of the veto. In 1995 at the Cartagena summit and again in 1998 at the Durban summit, they stated that efforts must be made to democratize the Security Council and that the use of the veto should be restricted as a prelude to its eventual elimination.

We believe that restricting the veto power would be a step in the right direction. Furthermore, we believe that there is a need to develop a balanced interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. While the Council has been actively engaged in this field, regrettably the Assembly has found little opportunity to discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in cooperation with the Council, as provided for in the Charter.

Adoption of General Assembly resolution 53/30, by which we agreed not to adopt any resolution or decision on the reform of the Security Council without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the Members, was a significant achievement. It was the result of constructive negotiations which we hope continue. Indeed, the broadest possible consensus among Member States is necessary to ensure a genuine reform of the Council.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, it is on your initiative that today the General Assembly is once again conducting, as it has done in recent years, the debate on equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Our delegation understands that your initiative has been inspired by the concern to know better where members stand on this topic and thereby to provide guidance for the activities of the Working Group which will be meeting under your chairmanship in the first half of next year. It is in this spirit that the French delegation would like to make the following brief comments.

Our first observation relates to the reason why the General Assembly has been discussing this topic already for six years, which is that the task that it has set itself is a long-term project. This requires patience, endurance and hope of everyone. Patience and Endurance, by the way, are the names of the two stone lions that guard the entrance to the New York Public Library.

The second comment is that, despite the passage of time, the interest of the Member States in this topic has not flagged. This is confirmed by the large-scale participation of delegations in the debates today and their activities in the work of the Working Group, as well as by the number of delegations that referred to this topic in the general debate at the beginning of the current session. This can be explained by the importance of this topic for the future of the United Nations.

The third observation is that the spirit of the discussion seems to have become calmer since last year. We know indeed that the very the importance of the topic has in the past imparted quite a lively tone to the debate, and sometimes contradictory arguments were presented with passion by those who supported them. The adoption last year of General Assembly resolution 53/30 of 23 November 1998 has certainly contributed to calming the discussion. It was important that consensus could be reached on that resolution and that it recalled, in particular, the importance of reaching general agreement.

The fourth observation is that the work performed by the Working Group this year has been far from negligible, as shown by the report before us today. This document contains general observations on which a consensus could be reached. It also contains useful documents prepared by the Bureau on the subject of the Security Council's working methods and its transparency. The preparation of these observations and documents has been made easier by the initiatives taken by the Bureau, in particular by the distribution of questionnaires to all delegations. In this connection our delegation would like to express its appreciation for the role played by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Opertti, and by the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors Dahlgren and de Saram. The work accomplished in 1999 strikes us as a useful basis for the discussions that will take place in the Working Group next year.

The fifth observation is that debate in the General Assembly and in its Working Group has already had an impact on the practice of the Security Council. Several proposals formulated in the Working Group on improving the transparency of the Council's functioning were later adopted and implemented by the Council itself. All of us can notice efforts made by the Council towards greater transparency, and we recall in this regard the working papers prepared and transmitted by the French delegation in 1994. This improved transparency can now be seen in the larger number of open meetings which more frequently deal with geographical situations on which representatives of the Secretariat are called upon to make statements. It can also be seen in the recent resort to formal private meetings during which members of the Council debated in the presence of non-member States which desired to be present.

The sixth and last observation the French delegation would like to make is that as to the substance, France's well-known position remains unchanged. France remains in favour of an increase in the number of members of the Security Council in the two existing categories, permanent and non-permanent. France is in favour of permanent seats for Germany and Japan, but also for three countries of the South. It supports the creation of new non-permanent seats. We think that so as not threaten the ability of the Council to act rapidly and effectively, the increase in the number of non-permanent members must be reasonable. In this context, we have indicated that the total number should remain less than 25 but should be greater than 21.

We favour new permanent members having the same prerogatives as the current permanent members. While we are ready to work on any formula that would make general agreement possible, we see no hope for coming to an agreement on changing, by an amendment of the Charter or other means, the rights of current permanent members, rights which France exercises, however, in a responsible and restrained manner.

Lastly, we are ready to pursue in a pragmatic manner the efforts of more than four years to make the working methods of the Security Council more transparent.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): Since the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council was established in 1993, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/26, Member States of the United Nations have been actively participating in discussions and deliberations on this important subject. Although a final outcome acceptable to all on the

question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council still remains elusive, one encouraging development was the emergence of a consensus view that the Council should at least be expanded to conform to the present-day realities of the enlarged membership of the United Nations, though there are differing views on how to do so. Our present deliberations on the item and the keen participation of many delegations amply demonstrate that the reform of the Security Council remains one of the top priority issues on our agenda.

I would here like to thank the former President of the General Assembly and former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the dedication with which he tirelessly undertook the task. My delegation would also like to express our appreciation to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador John de Saram and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren, for endeavouring to do their best in steering the work of the Working Group in this year's deliberations. My delegation is also confident that under the able leadership of the new Chairman, the Working Group will continue to make further progress.

Many proposals have been put on the table regarding the possible size of the Council, which is the core issue of the enlargement process. A vast majority of Member States have made known their preference for enlargement in both categories of the Council membership, permanent as well as non-permanent.

It is our view that, if the Security Council is to become more representative of contemporary political and economic realities and is to better represent today's United Nations of 188 Member States, it should be expanded in both categories. My delegation's preference regarding the size of the Council is that it be enlarged to as many as 26 members.

My delegation also subscribes to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that if there is no agreement on other categories of membership, for the time being expansion should take place only in the non-permanent category. It is my delegation's view that in order to overcome the current impasse on the question of permanent seats in the reformed Security Council, a compromise formula, acceptable to all parties, should be worked out through enhanced consultations and discussions among the Member States. We are of the view that in the event other options fail to command enough support, the idea of rotating permanent seats should also be considered as one of the options in the permanent membership category.

Another key issue facing the reform of the Security Council is the question of the veto, which is an integral part of the reform package. Although the abolition of the veto represents an ideal solution and the ultimate goal in the democratization of the reform process, one needs to be realistic. Before we can abolish the veto, its application should be limited, and it should be exercised only under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. My delegation believes that the issue of the veto should not be de-linked from the process of reform and enlargement of the Security Council. It is my delegation's consistent view that the veto is unjust and anachronistic, and its elimination is the most logical conclusion.

It is our belief that the new permanent members of the Security Council should enjoy the same rights and privileges as the current members. That, in essence, is the position of my delegation on this significant subject.

It is my delegation's fervent hope that our deliberations will give added momentum to the reform process and contribute gainfully towards the eventual establishment of a larger and more equitably representative Council, capable of meeting the challenges of the new millennium.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): While this is the fifth time that I have addressed the General Assembly on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, it is the first time that I have done so with the benefit of almost a year's experience on the Security Council. I hope to apply some of that experience to our discussion today, and to the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group in the coming year.

If the purpose of this debate is to take stock of where we are and to provide some general guidance for the Open-ended Working Group in its coming session, then my starting point has to be the noticeable difference between the progress that has been made over the years in the two clusters into which we have divided our work. Progress in the consideration of cluster II was clearly recorded in last year's report of the Working Group (A/53/47). There is also tangible evidence that our efforts for transparency and improved working methods in the Security Council have had a positive impact on the way members now conduct the Council's business.

(spoke in English)

When Canada assumed its seat in the Council last January, the norm was one open meeting of the Council — that is, a meeting that was not simply a formal meeting to adopt a decision — each month. In contrast, this morning's open briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was the third opportunity in the past two weeks for non-members of the Security Council to attend the deliberations of Council members. We understand that the United Kingdom presidency plans on holding some, if not all, of the discussions next week on East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as open briefings. This progress towards transparency and openness benefits enormously the credibility of the Council, and I extend my congratulations to the delegation of the United Kingdom on these creative and concrete steps forward.

Let me cite several other examples of increasing transparency in the Council, the roots of which are found in the work of the Open-ended Working Group: regular briefings for delegations immediately after informal consultations; the distribution and posting on Internet sites of the Council's programme of work and statements to the press; and regular consultations with troop-contributing nations prior to mandate renewals by the Council. Thanks mainly to the initiative, imagination and efforts of Argentina, and of Ambassador Petrella in particular, next year's incoming members of the Security Council have been observing our work in the Council since the beginning of December. I can only imagine how useful such exposure will be in enabling a newly elected member to become a fully effective Council player shortly after taking its seat at the beginning of January.

I hope that in the next few weeks the Council will adopt a note by the President which will include other transparency measures, such as the circulation to all Member States of the weekly situation report prepared by the Secretariat on peacekeeping operations and automatically making available draft resolutions to the entire United Nations membership once they have been presented in the Council. Perhaps most significantly, I hope that this note will enshrine and formalize the currently emerging practice of holding the Council's deliberations in public, from thematic and orientation debates to briefings and discussions on specific subjects.

The above facts stand in sharp contrast to the current situation with regard to cluster I, where again, according to last year's report of the Open-ended Working Group, substantial differences of view still remain. Furthermore, I regret to say that I am not aware that new ideas or practical suggestions are invigorating the discussion of these issues in the way that the Council's working methods are being updated to meet current results. We are, in fact, not much further along on those questions than when we initiated our discussions six years ago. And it strikes me that if those solutions which have been vigorously pursued over these years had been on the right track, some progress should indeed have been possible by now. Are we, therefore, perhaps trying to fit a square peg into a round hole?

It seems to my delegation that, instead of trying to satisfy a need with a solution, we have been trying to solve that need with another need. In plain words, we have been attempting to reconcile the need to have the Security Council become truly representative of the United Nations membership, with the need of some influential Member States to have their relative influence — and yes, in some cases, their significant financial contribution to the Organization — recognized in a tangible way.

Perceived from this angle, the problem of cluster I changes in dimension. For just as there has never been any doubt about the legitimacy of the need to make the Security Council more representative of the United Nations of the twenty-first century, it does not seem unreasonable for Member States which make exceptionally large contributions to the Organization to participate proportionally more in its decision-making on fiscal issues. Yet the mere fact that a Member State is a major financial contributor to the Organization or happens to be influential in other ways does not mean that the tangible recognition of that contribution or of that influence ought to be a permanent seat on the Security Council, the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

I do not, therefore, exclude the possibility that in other areas of the Organization it may be appropriate for disproportionately large contributions to warrant some right of more significant participation in the appropriate financial bodies. For example, the largest financial contributors to the United Nations may need to play a larger role in overseeing the way the Organization spends its money. What I do exclude, however, is that seats on the one organ whose decisions are binding on all other Member States, the one organ which is responsible for the most vital and therefore most volatile of our interactions, should be allocated on the basis of a Member's financial contribution to the Organization. In my delegation's view, membership of the Security

Council can be determined only through election by one's peers, chosen in accordance with the criteria laid down in Article 23 of the Charter.

Methods of work and size and composition are not the only two issues before the Working Group on which there is a stark difference in the progress made. The two aspects of the veto that we have been examining — the scope of existing permanent members' veto rights and the question of whether any possible new members would also have the veto — have achieved far different results in our deliberations. I am confident that there exists general agreement today that the scope of the veto ought indeed to be limited to Chapter VII actions. There is no such agreement, even among those States that favour expansion in both categories of Council membership, to extend any veto power to any new permanent member.

I am firmly convinced that there is a great deal for us to discuss before we resume our detailed discussions of the two clusters, but I would suggest that we begin with an examination of the reasons why progress has been achieved on some aspects of our mandate and why such progress has so steadfastly eluded us on others. We should use this opportunity to cast our work in this new perspective. I look forward to a full examination of this question in the general debate at the outset of the Open-ended Working Group's meetings, and I can assure the Assembly of Canada's full and active participation in all of the Working Group's deliberations in the coming year.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Security Council reform is vital for the future of the United Nations. For the United Nations to be successful, mankind must in the coming century have an effective, democratic, equitable and just mechanism for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the Security Council, both in its membership and in its working methods, must reflect the new realities of international politics in an increasingly interdependent and globalized world. The Security Council absolutely must reflect not only the military capacity but also the economic influence and moral authority of the various actors on the international stage.

We cannot limit Security Council reform to a mere increase in the Council's membership or to changes in its working methods. Genuine reform must ensure that in the future the Council satisfactorily shoulders its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Reform of the Security Council must thus focus on the distribution of power and responsibility within the international community.

The founding Charter of the United Nations decrees that the Council acts on behalf of all Member States. The members of the Security Council, whether permanent or elected, equally represent the other Members of the Organization. Any small or disarmed country enjoys the same level of representation in the Security Council as a major economic or military Power. That principle is the basis of the Council's legitimacy.

The members of the Council are responsible not only to their own Governments; in the decisions they take, they are responsible also to the other members of the international community.

No Power can act within the Security Council motivated solely by its own interests. Similarly, the Security Council cannot become a foreign policy tool for any Power. We believe that all Council members are accountable for their actions.

We who are participating in the process of reforming and revitalizing the Security Council must also consider the Council's agenda. In view of its primary task, the Council must be the decision-making centre on all measures for the maintenance or restoration of peace. It is therefore inadmissible for the Council to shirk its responsibilities or its duties. Costa Rica considers it unacceptable for the Council intentionally to ignore situations involving genuine threats to peace because some of its members are directly or indirectly involved in them. Genuine reform of the Security Council requires guarantees that the Council will in the future be far more just, equitable and impartial.

Over the past year, we have made small but important steps forward in the reform process. For the first time, we have agreed on a number of general observations in which we have included commitments we have made, such as an express reference to those areas in which we have differences.

We cannot ignore the magnitude of those differences. We have yet to determine the number and categories of the new members of the Security Council. We have yet to agree on the use and limits of the veto. We have yet to agree on reform in the Security Council's working methods necessary to guarantee transparency and legitimacy. We have yet agree on a periodic review mechanism for the Council.

In this context, we may need to question whether our efforts will bear fruit. My country feels that it is possible to reach positive results. We believe that, if all delegations make genuine efforts and set realistic goals, it will be possible successfully to conclude the reform and restructuring process in the Security Council.

Costa Rica favours an increase in the number of members of the Security Council among developed and developing countries alike. My delegation also supports a review process for the working methods of the Council in order to ensure its efficiency, legitimacy and transparency. My country is firmly committed to the revitalization of the Security Council.

Costa Rica will wholeheartedly support efforts to ensure agreement in this sphere. We trust that these efforts will lead to an open, democratic and transparent consultation.

Postponement of the date of recess

The President: I would like to draw the attention of members to a matter relating to the date of recess of the current session.

Members will recall that at the third plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, the General Assembly decided that the fifty-fourth session should recess on 14 December 1999. Members will further recall that at its 73rd plenary meeting, on 8 December, the Assembly decided to postpone the date of recess to 17 December 1999. However, the Assembly will not be able to conclude its work on 17 December.

I therefore propose to the Assembly that it postpone its date of recess to Wednesday, 22 December 1999.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.